

# **Pumping Iron at Frankie's**

by

**Jacques Punt**



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Supervisors:

Prof. Rob Pattman

Jacob MJ du Plessis

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## Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

Jacques Punt

March 2021

## Abstract

The events and analysis prompting this study play out in a weight training gym in the Rusthof neighbourhood in Strand, Western Cape. It is called Frankie's Gym and originated to help deal with social issues in the neighbourhood, especially because of gangs and gang-related activities that are high in this neighbourhood. Frankie's Gym (FG) focuses on influencing young men so that they do not get involved with gangs. The main research questions that drove this study were how FG can deal with the challenges that face the Rusthof community; what community means in the social environment of FG; and, how people at FG identify and perform gender. This study looked specifically at theoretical concepts like the gym as a sports-based intervention, community building, and masculinity(-ies). At FG there is a complex interplay of construction of community and masculinity(-ies). These two concepts seem to work in tandem in order to construct a social network and community, based around helping and caring for one another. In this way, FG and the people involved in it can influence their clientèle to live a life away from the "bad stuff" in the neighbourhood – like gangs. Critically however, there are limitations to this. For one, people drop out of the gym and may start engaging with drugs and gangs, possibly finding it difficult to maintain a commitment to FG. Additionally, the focus on weight lifting can contribute to a version of being male which idealises toughness over sensitivity, although many of the young men with whom I engaged seemed to be committed to an ethic of care which they learnt and was exemplified in the gym. Lastly, the effectiveness of the intervention seems to depend to some extent on the role Frankie plays as a model of a caring, sensitive, compassionate, sociable and creative man, and this raises the question of who can replace Frankie when he retires (he is currently in his 70s) and continue the work with FG in the community. This is an ethnographic study and participant observation was the main research method. This provided rich data that was supplemented by a semi-structured interview with the owner Frank Hendricks. Applied thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

## Opsomming

Die geografiese plasing van die gebeure en analise wat hierdie studie loods, is 'n gimnasium vir gewigoptel in die Rusthof-woonbuurt in Strand, Wes-Kaap. Die gimnasium heet Frankie's Gym en het oorspronklik ontstaan om sosiale kwessies in die omgewing aan te spreek, veral as gevolg van bendes en hoë frekwensie van bende-verwante aktiwiteite in hierdie buurt. Frankie's Gym (FG) fokus veral daarop om jong mans te beïnvloed om nie by bendes betrokke raak nie. Die belangrikste navorsingsvrae wat aanleiding tot hierdie studie gegee het, was hoe FG die uitdagings waarmee die Rusthof-gemeenskap te kampe het, kan hanteer; wat gemeenskap beteken in die sosiale omgewing van FG; en hoe mense by FG geslag identifiseer en uitvoer. Hierdie studie het spesifiek gekyk na teoretiese konsepte soos die gimnasium as 'n sportgebaseerde intervensie, gemeenskapsbou en manlikheid(-hede). In FG is daar 'n ingewikkelde samespel van konstruksie van gemeenskap en manlikheid(-hede). Dit kom voor asof hierdie twee konsepte in tandem werk om 'n sosiale netwerk en gemeenskap daar te stel wat gebaseer is daarop mekaar by te staan en te help. Op hierdie manier kan FG en die mense daarin ander beïnvloed om hul lewens weg van die bendes en van die “slegte dinge” in die buurt te leef. Daar is egter kritiese beperkings in hierdie verband. Mense verlaat eerstens die gimnasium en begin met dwelms en bendes betrokke raak. Dit is dan moontlik moeilik om 'n verbintenis tot FG te handhaaf. Daarbenewens kan die fokus op gewigoptel bydra tot 'n manlikheid-beeld wat taaiheid bo sensitiwiteit idealiseer, hoewel baie van die jong mans met wie ek in kontak was, toegewyd was aan 'n etiese versorgingsetiek wat hulle in die gimnasium geleer en uitgebeeld het. Laastens blyk die doeltreffendheid van die intervensie tot 'n sekere mate afhanklik te wees van die rol wat Frankie speel as 'n model van 'n sorgsame, sensitiewe, deernisvolle, gesellige en kreatiewe man, en dit laat die vraag ontstaan wie vir Frankie kan vervang wanneer hy aftree (hy is tans in sy 70's) en voortgaan met die werk met FG in die gemeenskap. Hierdie is 'n etnografiese studie en deelnemende waarneming was die belangrikste navorsingsmetode. Dit verskaf ryk data wat aangevul is deur 'n semi-gestruktureerde onderhoud met die eienaar Frank Hendricks. Toegepaste tematiese analise is gebruik om die data te ontleed.

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*Anthropology is just disciplined curiosity.*

Fiona C. Ross

## Abbreviations

ATA – Applied Thematic Analysis

CMT – Critical Masculinity Theory

FG – Frankie's Gym

NFL – National Football League

REC – Research Ethics Committee

SANDF – South African National Defence Force

SBI – Sport-Based Intervention

SOS – Sons of Satan (name of a gang)

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Background

This research is situated in the seaside town of Strand in the Western Cape. The research area in Rusthof is familiar to me because I completed my Honours research project there in 2017. The origin of the neighbourhood of Rusthof in Strand is closely related to South Africa's Apartheid past. The racist policies applied during the Apartheid era forced variously identified ethnicities to live in specifically identified areas in the country. Under the Population Registration Act of 1950 people were grouped into the racial categories of White, African, Coloured, and Indian (Salo 2007: 162). This racially driven policy worked together with the Group Areas Act of 1960 to move and relocate people physically to live in specifically identified areas. Whites were given the best resourced areas to live in, while Africans were relocated to what was called "ethnic homelands", allowing only a small number to remain in White areas and only under certain conditions (Salo 2007: 162). Usually, the only reason these Africans were allowed to stay in the White areas was because they provided labour for these areas. Coloured and Indian people were allowed to stay in the White areas, but they were moved to their own specific "group area" (Salo 2007: 162). The relocation of African, Coloured, and Indian people was forced on them and resulted in the displacement of at least 1,5 million people between the 1960s and 1980s (Salo 2007: 162). Bearing this in mind, the predominantly Coloured neighbourhood of Rusthof is a product of this historical forced relocation and displacement of people in South Africa. Another reason for the great prevalence of Coloured people is linked to the equally racialised preference of labour in the Apartheid era. The Western Cape had been identified as a Coloured preferential labour province just before this policy from the 1950's (Salo 2007: 161). This reality is also true for the nearby Cape Flats where there are still much larger areas where Coloured people are concentrated in contemporary South Africa.

As you drive through Strand to Rusthof, you will immediately see the change in spatial distribution, geographical area, and socio-economic status, which is a legacy of Apartheid in South Africa. The flora one associates with suburban neighbourhoods and seaside towns becomes less abundant, with trees and gardens disappearing almost entirely as you reach Rusthof. This is where it becomes very clear that you

are moving into a poor to lower middle-class neighbourhood. The houses need maintenance, roads need repairs, there are many informal businesses and many minibus taxis. However, once you are in the neighbourhood, you will find the usual hustle and bustle of the neighbourhood – people walking home, meeting friends, quickly going to the spaza shops, and others just passing through en route to their houses in the neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is where I spent my research days building relationships. This neighbourhood is also characterized by high levels of unemployment and crime. The Western Cape's percentage of the 17 community-reported serious crimes is 20,26% in 2018/19, accounting for about a fifth of 17 community-reported serious crimes for the whole of South Africa (South African Police Service 2019). The Western Cape in fact has two of its own police stations among the top ten for the 17 community-reported serious crimes at police stations in the country (South African Police Service 2019). Cape Town Central is at the very top of the list, Mitchells Plain third, and Nyanga follows at fifteenth place (South African Police Service 2019). The larger town in which Rusthof finds itself, Strand, is only about 35 minutes from Mitchells Plain and Nyanga. The close location of these towns will almost certainly have an influence on the communities in Strand. The feeling towards crime in Cape Town and its closest surrounds reached boiling point in the beginning of 2019. The Cape Flats, for example, had seen the introduction of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to aid the police in dealing specifically with gangs and gang-related crime (Hyman 2019: 1). The SANDF will be staying on in these areas for another six months, until March 2020, as the deployment of the armed forces has proven effective in aiding the police (Evans 2019: 1). Among the areas receiving SANDF support are Mitchells Plain, Nyanga and Khayelitsha. Khayelitsha is even closer to Strand, a mere 19-minute drive away. The Somerset West area, and subsequently Strand, fall within the borders of the Cape Town municipality. This region ranks second in terms of population size in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2019a). It should be noted that the City of Cape Town has a very high rate of unemployment, at 23,9% (Statistics South Africa 2019a). This is unfortunately the case even though most people (69,6%) can work (or are employable) (Statistics South Africa 2019a). People of working age are defined as those who are between the ages of 15 and 64. One of the most concerning facts in respect of these statistics is that youth unemployment is 31,9%. Strand's statistics are just as worrying, as it falls within the boundaries of the Cape

Town metropole. Most people (67,1%) in Strand are also able to be employed (Statistics South Africa 2019b, Punt 2017: 8). Strand also shares the same unemployment rate with the City of Cape Town (23,9%) (Statistics South Africa 2019).

Frankie's Gym is located in the neighbourhood of Rusthof. This weight training gym is where I developed and conducted my research. One of my main focuses is on the young men who mainly frequented the gym, their experiences of, and interests in going to the gym. I got to know these young men by attending the gym regularly and participating in lifting weights and other gym activities. The gym is the size of a garage (imagine two to three cars parked behind one another). It is intended to contribute as an initiative aimed at encouraging young men in Rusthof to become less involved in gangsterism, drugs, and crime.

Frankie's Gym came into being in 2008, following a heart-breaking event that happened to Frank Hendricks's family. Frank, at age 70, is still the owner to this day. "Frank's twenty-year-old son intervened to prevent a girl from being harassed by a local gang, the Schoolboys; he was stabbed twelve times, according to a 2013 *Mail & Guardian* article" (Gibbs 2013: 1; Punt 2017: 8). His son regrettably passed away in hospital while receiving treatment for his wounds. This is where Frank's son asked him not to prosecute the young adults who had hurt him (Gibbs 2013: 1; Punt 2017: 8). Frank gathered enough courage to contact these young adults, members of the gang who had hurt his son. Frank eventually talked to these young adults and after an emotional meeting, felt he needed to help them instead of prosecuting them. This is when Frank conceptualised and started the gym in his backyard. He has since moved the gym to where his garage would have been. The gym became a place for "anyone but especially for the youth to vent their frustrations and spend time – instead of lazing about in the streets" (Gibbs 2013: 1; Punt 2017: 8). Since the establishment of the gym, Frank has received donations to equip the gym better. He mentioned to me in an interview that there was a man from Great Britain (he could not remember his name) who read about his gym on one of his domestic flight magazines. He tracked Frank down and after seeing what Frank had done, went back to the UK and held a golf day in order to raise some funds for him. He then paid the money into Frank's bank account which Frank then used to construct a proper roof over the gym area. He also mentioned that one of the Virgin Active warehouses

close by had donated some spinning bikes and a treadmill. Other donations came from people in the Somerset West area who were no longer using their home gym equipment.

This gym is interesting to me because it does not function as what you might expect from a typical gym. A typical gym, in my use of the phrase, would be like a Planet Fitness or Virgin Active. These gyms are consumerist in nature and are individualised spaces. Essentially, a typical gym is run as a profitable business and only seeks to deliver a space for people to exercise. Gyms are used by people from all walks of life and certainly constitute a social space. Frankie's Gym, however, focuses much more on the sociality of the space of a gym. Frankie's Gym is not run in a consumerist manner. It also is not meant only to serve someone's individual exercising needs. Frankie's Gym is much more than just a place, for instance, just to do your weight training or "cardio". As I will discuss later in my ethnography, people exercising at this gym seem to develop a sense of community. Frankie's Gym itself then produces a community within the larger Rusthof area. For instance, one of the examples I elaborate on more in my ethnography, is something as simple as those who enter Frankie's Gym greet everyone else. Similarly, when they finish their workouts, they say goodbye to everyone else as they leave. Another quick example is that everyone in the gym will work together to help pack away weights and benches in order to keep Frankie's Gym neat. Frankie's Gym then, functions more as a community-based social space where many diverse social identities and concepts come together. Exercising at Frankie's Gym, as I will show later in my ethnography, is the medium through which people interact with each other in very close proximity (remember here the physical size of the gym). People exercising here tend to build friendships with each other, which in turn enables the Frankie's Gym members to construct a network of help and care for each other, thereby linking socially to each other in the Frankie's Gym community. The gym in this case is like a community within the larger Rusthof community. It is thus possible to use weight lifting as the medium through which to understand this community. I therefore also believe, like Loïc Wacquant, that a gym can represent the society of the immediate community (Wacquant 2004: 14-15, 17-18; Punt 2017: 8). It should be clear that those who use a gym utilise it in specific ways. This is important, as Frankie's Gym is not just a site where people exercise, but also a social site where people in the

Rusthof community congregate, again underlining that Frankie's Gym operates as a community within the larger Rusthof community. People come here to exercise, meet friends, and even to make use of the network of help and care that have grown because of the gym. Frankie's Gym is this social site where people socially construct a community. Through my research it became clear that Frankie's Gym and its gym members provided a way to understand the social realities that face people who live here.

The connection of my thesis to the anthropology of sport is important. In many cases, sport serves a social purpose as it brings people from all walks of life together:

Sport is an important realm of anthropological inquiry because it provides a nexus of body, multiplex identities, and multi-layered governance structures, combined with a performance genre that possesses qualities of play, liminality, and storytelling, that enables us to explore the connections among these dynamics in a unique way (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 454).

Besnier and Brownell (2012) make it clear why studying sport in the field of anthropology is important. Sport is a social thing to do. It can clearly give you the means to make sense of and better understand societies and communities where you encounter it. In my case, this implies using Frankie's Gym (FG), and weight training, to better understand not only what challenges may face the Rusthof community. Additionally, also to make sense of why this gym still exists and continues to grow; therefore, understanding how FG exists as a community and how it is socially produced by the people that frequent it. Around the time of the postmodern turn in the 1980s, the anthropology of sport moved out of a biological paradigm in which the core belief concerning the body was that it was only a biological entity (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 444). Sport became significant in the discipline of anthropology when a focus on culture production and representation through play and the body arose in the 1970s and 1980s (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 444-445). One of the main contributors to the understanding of the cultural meaning of play is Geertz's (1972) analysis of "Balinese cockfighting as 'deep play' – play in which the stakes (in this case, gambling bets) are so high as to seem irrational" (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 445). This shows that what is at stake is not money but social status. This demonstrates that the point at which sport became important in anthropology is linked to understanding how something like "play" (or

sport) can create cultural meaning in a given context. It was only in 1988 that a real turning point occurred in the discipline which gave anthropologists who study sport recognition within anthropology. The organisation of a large international conference, with support from the Seoul Olympic organising committee, served as the foundation for leading theorists and thinkers within the field to produce influential articles from the papers presented (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 448). However, it was only two decades later that the disciplinary mainstream and developments in sport history caught up with the approaches outlined by the scholars at this conference (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 449). This approach to sport “that was grounded in a cultural theory of the body and performance, finally cohered, taking into account transnationalism, colonialism, and globalization” (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 449). This novel approach in anthropology is what made sport an important focus in the discipline today. Therefore, an anthropological focus on sport emerges from cultural theory – how people create and sustain meaning in their lives. The anthropology of sport is focused on creating a better understanding of the global society we currently live in (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 444). Therefore, showing that sport is not just a physical activity, but also a culturally mediated activity. This is critical for my research on FG as I am interested in the cultural connotations associated with the gym, as well as how these connotations influence the sociality and culture that is being produced through and at FG, such as for instance, the cultural connotations attached to weight training at FG. Additionally, I wish to pursue how these connotations are mediated by the social relationships formed at FG. The rationale of FG as Frank himself understands it is highly cultural. Frank sees the gym as much more than just a place to come and do weight training. The gym, as I discuss later in my ethnography, allows community building with a focus on creating a culture of help and care amongst its members. However, FG also helps to create opportunities to see how there is a life away from, for example, gangs and drugs. To this end, the anthropology of sport provides the theoretical grounding that enables my research to use weight training to understand this community and cultural connotations associated with it.

Theoretically one might start to think about Bourdieu and *habitus*, as he has written about “the body” and sport. Bourdieu’s understanding is that “[h]abitus refers to a system of enduring dispositions, a habitual way of being, that becomes inculcated in



the body as a result of the objective conditions of daily life” (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 449). This concept is thus based on someone’s personal way of existing and practising what they have been socialised into. Very simply put, it accounts for how we all differ as social beings. As with most socially constructed ways of existing, you can change or modify your *habitus* through learning other ways of “being” or adopting a way of “being” and to a certain degree discarding what you used to know. Another way to think about this is that you can be socialised throughout your life and learn different social and cultural practices from any society. You can then either add this to your *habitus* or let it assimilate you into a new and different *habitus*. Bourdieu also saw sport as a way to understand people and society better, as for him sport could also attribute something like a social class onto someone’s *habitus* (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 449). However, links between sport and class have been volatile and have differed according to society and century. Amateur boxing, which in nineteenth-century England was a sport for the elite, today is considered a sport linked to race and under-privilege (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 449; Wacquant 2004). Yet, since Bourdieu wrote about this, there has been a shift in contemporary times, in anthropology at least, to focus more on the social factors associated with sport. Therefore, “‘body culture’ is a better tool than *habitus*, because it draws on the anthropological concept of culture to contextualize the body within the local meanings that are significant to the people whose bodies are in question” (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 449). So, body culture is much more widely applicable in societies throughout the world. This understanding of body culture and *habitus* helps me to make sense of how people at FG construct themselves socially, showing me a way to understand how people at FG are socially linked to build its community. People at FG habitually go and exercise at the gym. Resulting in not just weight training, but also, the act of attending FG becoming part of their *habitus* and body culture. In a sense, weight training at FG becomes part of the work ethic of the person’s who frequents it, having to work hard at maintaining their physical fitness and constructing the FG community. Similarly, this understanding of these concepts can show how sport as the medium (like weight training) can link people together. I discuss how people link to each other in my ethnography later through body projects. Body projects are informed by body culture and *habitus*. It is based more on how culture becomes internalised and part of the body in some way – in this case, the habitual routine and culture associated with going to FG and exercising to stay fit



and healthy; furthermore, seeing your body as a project that must consistently be worked on; adopting a kind of work ethic to attain your body project goals. These are not just physical (like building muscle or staying fit and healthy). It is also working mentally on yourself, meaning that you should do your schoolwork; work on your studies; go to work every day; and for many in Rusthof, to live a life away from drugs and gangs. Work ethic therefore is important to body projects as you must continually work hard to maintain yourself. This understanding of *habitus* and body culture allows someone like me, as an emerging anthropologist, to better understand a community through sport. I use this brief discussion as an entry point into my idea on “body-projects” in the context of FG, which I shall discuss further in my conceptual framework.

Lastly, I do think it is necessary to make it clear why I will be talking about weight training and not bodybuilding at FG. This is because many people would equate weight training and bodybuilding, which simply is not true. Bodybuilding is one way in which to use weight training. Weight training refers to the act of using weights to complete specified exercises, in a predetermined and planned routine, to exercise a muscle or muscle group in the body. Typically, people use weight training as an extremely effective way to build muscle. However, this type of training could also show significant results in exercise goals on losing fat. There is a multitude of training programmes that you can follow in order to attain your goals. Bodybuilding is one of the ways in which you can compete and do weight training on amateur and professional levels. Others may include Olympic weightlifting, “strong man” competitions, and even CrossFit. Bodybuilding also contributes to becoming more muscular than normal in order to compete in bodybuilding competitions. It also requires extremely strict training routines, as well as very strict diets. Boswell (2016), while researching bodybuilders and their identity (Black males specifically), also wrote about the bodybuilding practice of intensely strict exercise routines and diets. The important difference between weight training and bodybuilding is that weight training does not necessarily include the need to compete and be a bodybuilder. In many cases, people who weight train will continually want to get “bigger”, but it is not on the same level and scale that bodybuilding strives for. Weight training is what most people do in gyms when they use weights to make their exercise routines even more effective. The reason for this distinction is that most people who train at

Frankie's Gym do weight training. This could be to help them in their sport, fat-loss goals, or just as a form of getting fitter.

Frank was a bodybuilder when he was younger. He also won many bodybuilding competitions and has the trophies to prove it (see Image 1 below).



*Image 1: Frank's personal bodybuilding trophies and awards displayed in his TV room (Photo: Jacques Punt).*

I am a weight training enthusiast, and coincidentally, when I initially became involved in training like this, just for exercise, I read the *Mail & Guardian* article on Frankie's Gym. I remember how I thought it such an interesting space for a gym. What stands out from this memory is that I recall thinking I would like to train at Frankie's Gym one day. I do realise that not every weight training enthusiast will want to do this type of research. However, what really drew me to Frankie's Gym was the possibility of a gym being so much more complex than what I am used to with a typical gym. Call it my Anthropological curiosity if you will, but Frankie's Gym seemed intriguing. The article I read spoke about gangsters, people not in gangs, and even ex-gangsters training together in a type of harmony. This mix of different social identities within the small space of the gym just made it even more interesting. Additionally, the article spoke about the gym "helping" those who came to exercise there. This also resonated with me as in 2013 I was struggling to find my feet as a BComm first year. What added to this was that I could not exercise like I did in high school – I was not good enough to be selected for the university's sports teams. I did my best to exercise with my PSO (Private Student Organisation) residence, but most fellow students did not seem to take things seriously. I then rediscovered weight training (I

did some in high school) and it helped me immensely. Weight training not only helped me with focusing better as I have ADD, but also that I seemed to gain some sense of better structure and self-discipline in my life again. After my first year in 2013 I switched to a BA with modules in Sociology and eventually Anthropology. All the while I was still having Frankie's Gym in the back of my mind. Together all these experiences only increased my interest in Frankie's Gym and my curiosity to understand how it functions socially. I do hope this thesis will at least interest you enough to read the *Mail & Guardian* article which inspired me to do this research, but also, that you might be interested yourself to go for a "session" at Frankie's Gym.

## 1.2 Primary Research Problem and Questions

My research is focused on Frankie's Gym and what Frank is trying to achieve in the Rusthof community. I want to understand how a weight-training gym can help deal with challenges facing a community. Similarly, I am interested in how the gym operates and how it influences those who use it. Most of the gym members are men and I am also particularly interested in the masculinities produced here. Since I started my research in 2017, there has been a perception of Frankie's Gym that it is doing "good" in the community. I also want to understand why people think like this. My core research questions structuring my approach are:

- How is Frankie's Gym able to deal with challenges that face the Rusthof community?
- What does "community" mean in the social environment of Frankie's Gym?
  - Does the gym create a sense of community? If so, how?
- How do people in and around Frankie's Gym identify and perform gender?
  - What factors influence gym members' gender constructions?
  - How gendered is the gym in terms of numbers of participants, who hangs about with whom, and various exercises they do?

## 1.3 Conceptual Framework

### 1.3.1 Body Culture and Body Projects

The sporting body is situated within the thinking of body culture. Practice theories such as Bordieu's *habitus* lack a well-formed, developed understanding of culture (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 449-450). Instead the focus has fallen upon the concept of body culture, because it draws upon the anthropological concept of culture to

contextualise local meanings that are important to those whose bodies are in question (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 450). Body culture has been defined as “embodied culture” – the internalisation and incorporation of culture which not only provides necessary context but also “shapes the nature of [bodies’] actions and gives [bodies] meaning” (Besnier and Brownell 2012: 450). Body culture, together with the sporting body, will prove central to understanding how the members of FG make meaning through the gym and in their larger “community”.

### 1.3.2 Body Projects

Our bodies are important to us because essentially our bodies are us. We present ourselves in specific ways in order to be our individual selves. I would argue that your body plays not only a core part in your gender, but also in your identity. Currently there is considerable focus on bodies in the mainstream news and on social media. Whether you are paging through a magazine or scrolling through Instagram, at some point you will find an article on how to improve your health, or you come across yet another advertisement of a fitness model promising transformation. “[Contemporary times have] produced an unprecedented ‘individualization’ of the body, in which meanings are privatized and the body becomes a bearer of symbolic value” (Gill, Henwood and McLean 2005: 40). Therefore, I also believe that in a sense people see their bodies as projects, whether it is to become more muscular, alter the body’s appearance, or just to ensure conformance with a specific fashion trend. In today’s consumer society our bodies have become a kind of symbolic capital, but emphasis is on how your body looks and presents itself rather than on just what it can do (Gill *et al.* 2005: 40). Body projects to me mean “[constructing] and [maintaining] a coherent and viable sense of self-identity through attention to the body, particularly the body’s surface” (Gill *et al.* 2005: 40). In the context of my research, much of the body’s construction takes place at FG. Frankie’s Gym, however, can also link people and their own body projects socially. In a way FG uses weight lifting as the medium through which to link people and the body projects together. While people in FG are at the gym working on their own body projects, they start interacting with each other. One example from my ethnography is that almost everyone that exercises here does so with a partner. Someone can even go to FG alone and there will be someone with whom you can exercise. However, if people do exercise by themselves, they usually end up talking

to others they know. In this way they still exercise with someone even though they are not doing the same exercises. As another example, people training at FG focus their body projects on keeping them not just physically, but also mentally healthy. This means for example that they must choose not to get involved with crime, drugs, and gangs. Therefore, through sharing these similar body project goals they start forming the FG community. I elaborate further on this in my ethnography, but these examples already show how body projects are important in understanding FG.

There is a strong link between self-care regimes and body projects. In a sense a body project is also caring for yourself:

At a time when our health is threatened increasingly by *global* dangers, we are exhorted ever more to take *individual* responsibility for our bodies by engaging in strict self-care regimes. Heart disease, cancer and a host of other diseases are increasingly portrayed as avoidable by individuals who eat the right foods, stop smoking and take sufficient quantities of exercise (Shilling 2003: 5).

It is also clear that the commitment to care for yourself is continuous. Think about becoming ill before the autumn and winter seasons. You would possibly get a flu vaccination and regulate your vitamin intake more strictly; eat “healthier”, more nutritious foods and be more conscious of how bacteria and diseases spread. Similarly, if I have a type of chronic hay fever and I don’t take my daily medicine, my chest would block up and I will have a runny nose. However, self-care is also not limited to just overall good health. For instance, people who wear makeup must cleanse their faces at some point after wearing it all day. If they do not, their skin can become problematic, for instance, very dry or oily. The same can be said for weight training. You should ensure you do the right type of exercise in the correct form for it to work. Otherwise, in a worst-case scenario, you will be damaging your body. “Self-care regimes require individuals to take on board the notion that the body is a project whose interiors and exteriors can be monitored, nurtured and maintained [by yourself]” (Shilling 2003: 5). Body projects, in the context of my research, are based on the premise that everyone is working on his or her own individual goal(s). People do this in specific and set ways. In FG, this is commonly done in a such a way that everyone at the gym can help or assist with others’ body projects. For example, when someone is exercising in the gym, they will not only be able to get help to complete an exercise, but also motivation to exercise with even more intensity than they are doing already. This help is not limited to just exercise. Help is also given for

instance if someone is addicted to drugs and is trying to get off it. Body projects at FG enables the building of community and the construction of a network of help and care. I will elaborate on this further in my ethnography. This example just serves to point to why body projects are so important in the FG context.

Similarly, it must be kept in mind that this discussion of body projects is important in terms of my argument in this thesis. The gym members (and my participants) do not necessarily think about what they do at the gym to be a kind of body project. This is a theoretical link to my research which I think provides an effective way to understand what is happening at FG. The way my participants, in many cases, spoke about being at the gym gave me the sense that they thought of their bodies as projects in some ways. Some interactions gave me the sense that what they were doing in the gym are part of a larger “body project” even though they did not necessarily articulate it this way or such terminology. This was the case whether that could be building up muscle mass or just trying to live healthier and stop taking drugs. I will discuss this further in my findings. Therefore, throughout this thesis it should be noted that this is a way to understand and make sense of what is happening at Frankie’s Gym more easily theoretically. It is not meant to impose theoretical ideas on my participants, but to provide a theoretical understanding to others of this social space.

### 1.3.3 Sport-based intervention

Frankie’s Gym could be conceived of as a type of sport-based intervention (SBI). Indeed, Frank might have intended it to be such a type of project when he started it. This intervention is aimed at helping people (especially the youth in Rusthof) to choose a life away from gangs and drugs, showing that there is a life to live where people do not have to engage in gangs or drugs. In the context of FG sport (weight training) is used as an intervention programme aimed at young men in a poor to lower middle-class area. Issues of crime, such as high gang activity and unemployment are high in Rusthof. Typically, SBIs are intended to intervene in crime-stricken areas to aid in lowering crime rates and “anti-social” behaviour (Chamberlain 2013: 1279). Naturally, sport or sport programmes are at the heart of sport-based interventions. SBIs “for young offenders can involve a variety of sporting experiences, ranging from athletics and track and field to basketball, boxing, [and soccer]” (Chamberlain 2013: 1279). SBIs are intended to help provide “solutions” in



crime-ridden areas with a high concentration of offenders. Frankie's Gym uses weight training as the sport medium through which to alleviate delinquency, participation in gangs and illegal substance abuse, thereby creating a "community-based [programme] to try and divert young people away from anti-social and criminal activity [even] before it starts" (Chamberlain 2013: 1280-1281). This programme, like many others that exist all over the world, seeks to develop "self-esteem, life skills and support networks of the young people at risk of (re)offending" (Chamberlain 2013: 1281). In addition, at the heart of this, is "promoting a sense of community belonging and social responsibility" (Chamberlain 2013: 1281). SBIs use sport because it can serve as a medium through which to engage people and build relationships, not only with one another, but with themselves. This is what I also experienced throughout my life; growing up I always participated in sport at school. In my experience it can have a positive effect, depending on how it is implemented – for instance, some people might feel more alienated by sport. However, Mutz and Baur (2009: 308) argue that:

[S]ports activities are seen as a favourable, functional alternative to violent and aggressive behaviour. It is widely believed that physical activity allows a person to 'let off steam' without harming others. During sports, aggressive actions may only be displayed within a regulated context [...] the release of aggression can be achieved in a socially acceptable way.

This point of "letting off steam" also connects to the literature on *Working with Boys* – where it is recognised that using "hard" sports is specifically used to channel aggressive actions in an acceptable way (Pattman 2007). What is ultimately important is that sport can serve as a very effective medium through which to help members of a community to diminish and possibly even stop activities like delinquency, participation in gangs and illegal substance abuse. SBIs take on this construction of sport by using "hard" sports to achieve the intervention's end-goal. I try to take a non-judgemental view of this, seriously considering the opportunities this may offer to young men, at the same time, also recognising that in some way interventions like these may reinforce hegemonic masculinities by making people "strong and tough". I address this later in further detail in my ethnography. At FG, the SBI is implemented as a "pre-offence" within the community to help in finding a pathway "away from anti-social behaviour and a potential criminal career" (Chamberlain 2013: 1282). Therefore, I want to investigate FG through a type of SBI

lens as this gym is an intervention in Strand. Frank may not know he has created an SBI, but it does tend to operate like one. In this sense my research could also contribute to the existing research on SBIs, especially in terms of SBIs not focusing only on offenders and those who are incarcerated, but rather on the whole neighbourhood and surrounding community at large in a “pre-offence” approach.

#### 1.3.3.1 SBIs and Working with Men

Pattman (2007) argues that there is a long history of boys and masculinities (especially young black and coloured working-class men) being constructed as troublesome. He adds that, in response, programmes have been developed to address this, drawing on “hard” sports such as football and boxing which aim to channel boys’ energies in appropriate ways (Pattman 2007). However, programmes are influenced by essentialist understandings of gender which position boys as tough, girls as weak, and only some boys as weak (and effeminate).

Another, opposing view argues that certain boys become troublesome (for example sexually harassing girls) not because they fail to express masculinity appropriately but because of how they learn to position themselves in opposition to versions of femininity. Such an approach is influenced by the work of Connell and other proponents of Critical Masculinity Studies. These argue that there are different ways of doing masculinities, even if certain versions of masculinity associated with toughness and insensitivity may become hegemonic. The emphasis in this approach is on engaging with boys in ways which show empathy and respect, encourage self-reflexivity, and cross gender affiliations and identifications. (Pattman, 2007).

These concerns are exemplified in the work of Sonke Gender Justice. This is an NGO based in South Africa which engages with young men in the context of gender-based violence. However, while these have received considerable praise by gender theorists, others are more critical of it. For instance, Kopano Ratele, has pointed to the limitations of critical interventions like Sonke Gender Justice. Ratele argues that resistance can be expected from Black boys and men to interventions in a society still characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment which are highly racialized (Ratele 2015: S145). This is precisely because their identities as “men” are an “important resource through which to contest marginalisation and disempowerment” (Ratele 2015: S145). Similarly, areas characterised by gangs,



high levels of crime, and high unemployment figures for the youth can suffer a similar fate.

Salo (2007) argues that many Coloured young men in Manenberg learn to assert themselves as tough young men in contexts in which they are structurally disadvantaged. Men find it difficult to obtain work. This may be due to lack of cultural and educational capital. Yet at the same time they are expected to be breadwinners and to provide regular income for their families. This presents a classic example of how versions of hegemonic masculinity (as theorised by Connell, which will be discussed later) may set up ideals which many men may be in no position to achieve, at least not through 'legal' ways. Salo (2007) argues that in coloured areas like Manenberg, men create alternative pathways to assert masculinity. The efficacy of sports-based interventions in generating opposition to violence and gangsterism in such contexts is questionable. The studies and observations show how complicated SBI's can become in different social contexts in South Africa and around the world.

#### 1.3.3.2 SBIs and the South African Context

Sports-based interventions are useful tools especially in the attempt to address problematic masculinities. However, it is important to note that interventions need to be structured very carefully to avoid have participants disengage from what the intervention is trying to help change. In the South African context, as in many places in the world, Black and Coloured masculinities do not reap the same benefits as White masculinities. For many Black and Coloured masculinities, identifying as "tough" males provides a way for them to contest forms of marginalization they still experience in societies characterised by poverty, high unemployment, and that are highly racialised (Ratele 2015: S145). Therefore, disregarding the intricacies and various factors that play a role in gender and sexuality will not help to address, and possibly fix, issues associated with masculinities. For instance, it is not uncommon to hear that struggles for gender equality serve a White feminist agenda (Ratele 2015: S151).

This then relates to interventions and their limitations that are directed as pro-feminist. Failure to recognise and properly contextualise masculinities may lead men and boys (who form part of these interventions) more often than not to resist change and the intervention's objectives. Interventions that seek to engage masculinities should adopt an empathetic approach and recognise the different contributions that,

for instance, race and socio-economic class have on different masculinities (Ratele 2015: S146-S148). This makes it possible to engage fully with men and boys who are part of these interventions. Additionally, it allows interventions to take into account the variables which contribute to constructions of masculinities rather than focusing on just one thing.

One aspect which should also be touched on more in the South African context is that gender is conflated with femininity. This makes it difficult to engage men and boys in changing masculinities and accepting gender intervention programmes, which could result in the reinforcing of gender power relations and inequalities (Ratele 2015: S147). Awareness of this pitfall enables interventions to place greater focus on self-reflection to its participants on the kinds of problems they experience as gendered beings. For example, costs of living up to certain versions of masculinity like being perpetrators and victims of violence. This will help working towards solidifying a national rhetoric that men and boys are also gendered beings. It follows that change towards egalitarian masculinities can be realised because men and boys can become invested in it and recognise its importance.

#### 1.3.4 Community

Central to my research and Frankie's Gym (FG) is the sense of community, because FG does aim to build a sense of community in an area characterised by high levels of unemployment and crime. FG is a community-based gym, focused on providing a social network of help and care in the lives of those who use it, functioning additionally as a sport-based intervention (SBI), through which it strives to achieve some form of change in its community. This change is in the form of getting people (especially young men) away from crime, drugs, and gangs; reducing gang activity and the use of drugs in the community; showing the people of Rusthof that their lives can be lived in a different way. I will discuss this further in my ethnography. It is necessary, however, first to situate how I think about community in my research.

The concept of community seems to be something that people assume to be fixed and very clearly defined. However, communities are dynamic and are subject to change. For instance, I look at what role FG plays in the formation and production of community through every social activity at FG. Later in my ethnography I will discuss how, but the physical and social actions at FG produce community. It is actively constructed through not just attending FG and exercising, but also by the social

activities that take place (building better social relationships between those at the gym). Community then, not only comprises people who live in the same area and have shared interests; FG becomes a site where communities are produced and reproduced. When theoretically basing one's thinking on the social world, the definition of "community" might not be as straightforward as one might think. Probably the most common definition of what community is would include the idea that there is a shared sense of morals and values that contribute to a type of common identity among people. This could include a specific geographic location, or refer to people spread over distances, who identify with one another. This is in line with Bhattacharyya's (2004) concept of the solidarity of community: "A common identity means that people need to be able to identify whether they are part of a community or not, that becoming (or remaining) a member of a community is a significant act, and that others recognize the claim to membership" (Bradshaw 2008: 9). This posits that a "common identity" is usually central to what defines a community. People who share their common identities would know who everyone is in that community and would participate actively in identifying (also associating) with the specific community. Important to the concept of common identities within a community is that this does not necessarily mean the community is exclusive. Communities are usually open and dynamic, implying that people can join and leave communities. Similarly, communities change and adapt as time passes. They do not exist as permanent social groups for extended periods of time. What forms part of a common identity are things like a shared sense of values and culture. FG acts as the social space where these shared values and culture exist socially. Bradshaw (2008: 9) refers to other authors who substantiate the argument that communities are based on networks of friendships or similar social ties, operating on some form of rational principle. Accordingly, FG forms its own social network of help and care that is provided firstly to those who are part of its community. In FG's case, gym members would also go beyond the gym context and help other members of the Rusthof community who are dealing with similar issues. In this sense then community involves social control around the shared norms central to certain values and beliefs that are important to the existence of the community (Bradshaw 2008: 9). It is important to note that people in a community are linked socially in some form of commonality based upon shared norms and usually culture. This in turn forms the

core of their common identities and underlies my thinking on the concept of community.

Clearly community indicates a group of socially organised people who share common identities. There also exists a linked and interchangeable relationship in the term “community”, as it can refer to a physical place where people interact with one another, or to the social system where people organise themselves according to this system. It can also mean, as I have mentioned, the shared sense of identity of a group of people (Flora, Flora, and Gasteyer 2016: 14). Community is a complex concept in the sense that you can theorise on its meaning *ad infinitum*; however, its meaning is contingent to its use. My definition of community accords with what Bhattacharyya (2004) and Bradshaw (2008: 10) use as the basis of the theorisation, which is solidarity. This implies that at its core, a community requires relationships to be made and (or) solidarity between people. This is important to note because communities and their formation used to rely on propinquity (Bradshaw 2008: 10). However, community(ies) In contemporary times communities are no longer reliant on physical location. Therefore, in my research community refers to people who have a shared identity that at its core includes values and culture, but also a strong sense of solidarity. Critically, community(ies) can only exist if these feelings and social actions are reciprocated by other members of said community. Having established the theoretical basis for the definition of community, it is important to discuss community capitals.

#### 1.3.4.1 Community Capitals

Community capitals have direct relevance to the way I think about community throughout my research. Community capitals consist of seven sub-categories that further describe communities and their resources. These are natural capital, cultural capital, human capital, social capital, political capital, financial capital, and built capital.

First, natural capital constitutes the physical fauna and flora present in a specific location that “provide both possibilities for and limits to community sustainability” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 15). Second, cultural capital “[determines] a group’s worldview, how it sees the world, how the seen is connected to the unseen, what is taken for granted, what is valued, and what things a group thinks are possible to change” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 15). Cultural capital, then, is concerned with how communities are

created and exist. Third, human capital is concerned with what you have as a person, physically and mentally. This includes anything from “education, skills, health, and [even] self-esteem” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 16). Fourth, social capital comprises the common identity and social aspects that go with that of a community. This includes “mutual trust, reciprocity, groups, collective [or common] identity, working together, and a sense of a shared future” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 16). Fifth, political capital has to do with power in the community and the implementation of its social basis. “[How] a community or group [turns] its norms and values into standards, which are then translated into rules and regulations that determine the distribution of resources” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 16). Sixth, financial capital is, as the name suggests, everything to do with finances in the community. This could include “savings, income generation, fees, loans and credit [and so forth]. Financial capital [is] more mobile than other capitals and tends to be privileged because it is easy to measure” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 16). The seventh and final one is built capital. This includes things created by the people in the community and can be infra-or-superstructure (Flora *et al.* 2016: 16). I am, however, only focusing on cultural, human, and social capital because these three capitals have direct influence on Frankie’s Gym.

#### 1.3.4.1.1 Cultural Capital

Cultural capital acts as a lens through which people view their social reality in the community to which they belong. “[It is the] filter [through which people] regard the world around them, defining what is problematic and, therefore, can be changed” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 103). Cultural capital can be influenced through the typical structures that also socialise people: families, schools, religious institutions, and any other social institutions to which people are exposed. As with most socialisation agents, concepts like race, class, ethnicity, and gender will further modify this (Flora *et al.* 2016: 103). Culture thus plays a central role in this community capital, having the ability to influence how people are socialised and how they think about their social selves. To a certain degree this includes how people feel they fit into not only the community, but also how they fit into the broader society. This community capital forms one of the bases for how people participate and feel part of a specific community. Therefore, cultural capital is how people build their cultural beliefs and norms and project them to the rest of the community. Cultural capital can be one of

the main ways in which communities become socialised. This is important to FG because the gym enables the people who use it to construct their own type of culture associated with FG. I will discuss later in more detail, but FG members construct a culture based around helping and caring for each other. The use of the FG members of cultural capital is important to how the gym functions on a day to day basis. I would argue that cultural capital and human capital go hand in hand.

#### 1.3.4.1.2 Human Capital

As I have mentioned, human capital is concerned with what you have as a person, physically and mentally, indicating your assets. These includes e.g. “health, formal education, skills, knowledge, leadership, and potential” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 110). Think here about how central this is to my discussion on body projects. Typically, most of the rhetoric surrounding human capital is around formal education and learning (Flora *et al.* 2016: 110). This implies that human capital is enhanced or reduced, depending on educational or knowledge levels. Human capital is much more than this. Human capital is about how you can live your life individually in the social world, for instance, how you make decisions; how you might lead or assist in the leadership of social situations; how you think about topics and talk about them; and even just having the ability to improve your physical health to stay as healthy as a person can be (physically and mentally). In other words, “those attributes of individuals that contribute to their ability to earn a living, strengthen [the] community, and otherwise contribute to community organizations, their families, and self-improvement” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 110). Therefore, when considering human capital, you must think about people’s assets - whether these are abstract (like leadership skills) or more physical (like being able to be in good health) human capital will allow individuals to add to or take away from community building. Human capital incorporates into body projects. In my case, the body projects at FG is linked intricately to human capital. It shows how something like body projects are important to the social construction of community(-ies). In this sense, FG members work on and improve their human capital. However, human capital paves the way for FG members to link their body projects together socially, thus working on their body projects (human capital) in order to improve their lives and those that are part of the FG community. This is done living a “healthy” life and building social relationships that contribute to the cultural capital at FG. I will discuss this further in my ethnography, but the links

between these community capital concepts are important for understanding the FG community. Cultural and human capital are important to further produce social capital.

#### 1.3.4.1.3 Social Capital

Social capital is, as the name refers, the way in which people in a community are able to be social. Putnam (2002: 8) describes social capital as based on “social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity”. This includes the way in which we have social ties throughout the social networks in which we are always participating. This includes the social network that is constructed at FG. A more descriptive definition of Putnam that Flora *et al.* (2016: 160) refer to is that social capital is also the “features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”. This description also shows how social capital can further improve human capital, as social capital is about how individuals are essentially linked or tied together.

It is important to know that social capital has two essential parts that structure how these links or ties can be formed. These are bonding and bridging social capital. These two parts can assist in either improving or breaking down social capital. Bonding social capital includes “making multiple connections with individuals and groups from similar backgrounds” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 177). Bonding social capital is how people make connections with others that are similar and familiar to them. This is based on the typical features with which one may identify in others, such as sex, gender and class. Bridging social capital includes “[tying] diverse groups together within and outside a community” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 177). Bridging social capital is how people make connections with others that are different from them and more diverse than they are. It includes connections with these more diverse people or groups that are not necessarily part of the community. It is worth noting that bridging social capital tends to be implemented with a more specific purpose, whereas bonding connections tend to be more “affective or emotionally charged” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 166). This also points to the fact that people make connections, or ties, with others in specific ways. You won’t necessarily share a bond with a friend who has not been part of your community as you would with your brother or sister. Similarly, a person might prefer to make a bridging tie with someone in a different community, possibly to learn more about that community in order to become part of it. There are



four main ways in which bonding capital and bridging social capital interact with each other.

First, bridging capital and bonding social capital are low, because this would result in people in communities not being able to change. The growth and improvement of a community becomes stunted because connections with others are not being made. “Individuals in these types of communities view themselves as self-reliant – or as totally adrift” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 168). There is essentially no drive to work together and help one another. Second, bonding capital is high, but bridging capital is low. In this instance, a community would not want to change. Connections or ties made between people are with those in the community and are affectively and emotionally charged. “The community may organize in opposition to the outside in a kind of reactive solidarity” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 168). This indicates that new people who might want to join the community are not accepted. It can also mean that smaller groups within the larger community resist change that others in the community might want to effect (Flora *et al.* 2016: 168). Third, bridging capital is high, but bonding is low. People or communities from the “outside” would have some form of control over what is going on in the said community itself. Connections or ties that are made are with those who are not necessarily part of the community, as bond ties are lower. Control in this sense can come from “community elites, helping professionals, or in the most extreme form, local ‘bosses’” (Flora *et al.* 2016: 169). This also means that actions taken or implemented in the community are not necessarily to the advantage or according to the wishes of those in the community – they would tend to serve those who exert more influence, which would be those who have made better bridging connections or ties. Fourth and finally, bridging and bonding capital is high. In this instance, a community would have optimal opportunity to improve itself, grow, and improve their relations with other communities in the larger society. Everyone in this community can give and share in how the community organises itself (Flora *et al.* 2016: 169). In terms of social capital, this relationship of bridging and bonding social capital is what communities would strive to achieve, as it will mean that everyone helps to make the community and its individuals improve themselves in any sense; it implies that when circumstances in the community are not going well, there is a support structure in place. Whether an individual is struggling, or the whole community, people can work together to improve their social reality(-ies). This means



communities and people in social environments like this would then have the most agency in their lives. It should be clear how important this understanding is to FG and its community. The gym helps to create the social network where people use bonding and bridging social capital to further develop social relationships found at FG. I will later discuss exactly how, but this is important in building the social network of help and care to which FG members have access. Social, cultural, and human capital are at the core of how to understand the FG community.

### 1.3.5 Masculinity(-ies) Studies

Gender, I argue, plays a vital role in the kinds of identification and relations participants routinely make in FG. Indeed, FG was founded as an intervention aimed at young men. In reporting on and analysing the dynamics of FG, I draw on Critical Masculinities Studies which raises questions about the social construction of masculinities and how these are played out and performed in various contexts and remain subject to contestation (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Klein 1993: 16; Punt 2017: 19). The focus on gender for this research is masculinity(-ies). “[Simply put, masculinity(-ies) is a] set of social practices and cultural representations associated with being a man” (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 82). Most descriptions and understanding of masculinities are based on the concept of power. This implies the existence of power relations between different forms of masculinities, as well as among masculinities and other gender constructions (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 83; Peretz 2016: 32). For instance, earlier research on men and masculinities focused on the construction of masculinity which would have a “political dynamic, a dynamic of power” which points to masculinities’ links to power (Peretz 2016: 36). Historically, masculinity has been associated with being cast as the superior gender, especially, with regard to women and among masculinity constructs of themselves (Bird 2008: 5). This literally implies that some men are not just better than women, but also than other men. I say this, as stereotypically constructed masculinities would see some constructs of masculinity as just as inferior (for example, homosexual masculinities). “This is due, in large part, to the framing of gender expectations by dominant groups in ways that endorse dominant group practices [...] while at the same time devaluing the practices and characteristics of other [groups not part of it]” (Bird 2008: 5; Peretz 2016: 33, 36). Peretz (2016: 33, 36) also shares this way of thinking about masculinity(-ies). Now that I have established a basis for the concept

of masculinity, I shall discuss my own understanding of more theories relating to masculinity(-ies).

#### 1.3.5.1 Critical Masculinity Theory

My focus on masculinities for this thesis is based on the critical masculinity theoretical framework. As I discussed briefly in the preceding section, masculinities, especially in Critical Masculinity Theory (CMT), are never fixed – they are dynamic and vary according to each situation or context (Pattman, Frosh, and Phoenix 1998: 128). It is also important to realise that masculinities only really become meaningful when they are constructed in opposition to other genders, such as femininity (Pattman *et al.* 1998: 125). Therefore, following from this, researchers who are informed by CMT argue there is no such thing as masculinity as if this is unitary and fixed at birth. Rather, the argument is that there are different masculinities and different ways of doing these. Furthermore, they work with the assumption that gender is relational and imbued with power. Theorists add that masculinities and femininities are constructed relationally through everyday forms of interaction.

Research with boys, influenced by CMT, has typically taken a “boy-centred” approach and “builds on the idea of masculinities as something achieved – a practice or practices, a set of 'performative acts' or an activity of 'doing' gender” (Pattman *et al.* 1998: 126). This means that masculinities are forms of gender identities that are constantly created and adapted to the person's context, and therefore constantly in flux.

My research in FG raises questions about how gender and especially masculinities are performed and achieved. My thinking on gender performativity is informed by Butler's (1990) work and theories. It is easier to recognise gendered identities when you think of them as performative acts by whomever you are interacting with. However, some may struggle to construct their gendered identities successfully precisely because of the performativity of gender and the fact that a gendered identity is “something achieved”. It is necessary to look at how spaces (like in FG with equipment and workouts) are gendered in order to fully understand how gender is performed and constructed. In FG for example, this can shed light on whether certain versions of masculinities become “hegemonic”. Additionally, there is the aspect of how these gender relations structure other social relations in FG. The performativity of gender shows how masculinity(-ies) differ and can be used to tip

social situations in someone's favour. In any given context, masculine identities would have to adjust and adapt their masculinities to help improve their social situations and interactions. For example, this could be to “survive” better in social groups. The “dichotomy between asserting or proving masculinities and expressing feelings, especially in male groups, tends to be experienced as an acute disjunction between a 'public' and a 'private', 'authentic' self” (Pattman *et al.* 1998: 135). This split between different gender identities gives one an indication of how complex gendered identities really are and why some people may struggle with their own identity creation, as gendered identities are never really constant and the same in every social situation.

Important to note as well is a characteristic of patriarchal or male dominated societies is a tendency to conflate gender with women and girls. The effect of this is to reinforce gender power relations and inequalities. Pro-feminist writers like Lindsay Clowes and Kopano Ratele argue that this needs to be critiqued. The critique needs to include interventions with young people; boys and men need to reflect on themselves as gendered beings; and the costs of living up to certain versions of masculinity for them (for example, as perpetrators and victims of violence). For many, referring to gender elicits concepts of only femininities and female – so much so, that in many instances most people will not consider that masculinities are also gendered concepts – that men can be gendered. Bearing this in mind, when one does try to engage males and their masculinities critically, they have some resistance to it. One reason for this is that by way of thinking about gender equality it means something negative for them instead of helping each other get on the same playing field. Clowes (2015) noted this quite well in her study with students in an introduction to a Gender Studies course. For the male participants (students), gender equality is “understood as requiring men to give up privileges they have held since time immemorial” (Clowes 2015: 25). In many instances, this notion that males and masculinities of having to “give up” their power for gender equality is quite noticeable. This is problematic from the beginning as it points to the notion that masculinities cannot be gendered. For instance, there it emerged in Clowes' study that there is a “dominant understanding that what women have gained, men have lost, and that change in men's lives has largely been disadvantageous” (Clowes 2015: 29). This thinking is by no means limited only to this study. This way of

thinking about contemporary times and gender is concerning, because it will certainly contribute to the resistance to change in masculinities, as change in this sense is understood as something quite negative when in fact it is precisely the opposite: the imbalance of gender power and the attempt to correct this balance is the crux of the argument. It is too easy to resist change when one feels as if you are reaping the “benefits” of a system that has been in place for so long that one does not even notice it. This is especially an important topic in South Africa. Even though there is a multitude of local and international research, and activism around and on masculinities, most people and even South Africa’s own government policy documents still only understand that gender refers to women and girls (Clowes 2015: 28). If it has not been clear in any of my discussions, it is imperative that the understanding that masculinities are gendered, and part of the gender conversation. This includes the fact that in many cases masculinities should be focused on more as many core gender issues stem from problematic masculinities and its practices.

There should be a focus on assisting men and boys to realise they are gendered; not only that they are, but also in what way they are gendered. Then that masculinities are linked to inherent societal patriarchal power. This will help them to think critically about their own identities, their construction, and performances of masculinities. As such, realising the link in how oppression and privilege intersect provides a way for young men to confront “a privileged identity, one that has been [largely invisible] and that goes unchallenged within our collective [societal] consciousness” (Clowes 2015: 34). Privilege and oppression are keywords here as men themselves are oppressed by hegemonic masculinities and in many cases, the actions derived from performances of others’ masculine identities. Therefore, this thinking will help pave the way toward new constructions of masculinities which are egalitarian in nature and do not further hurt individuals, other genders, and society as a whole.

There are many ways in which to think and theorise about gender and the many forms it takes. “Gender identities have been theorised as discursive categories ‘hierarchically arranged in relation to each other’” (Pattman *et al.* 1998: 125). Connell’s (1995) theorisation on masculinities stems from this type of thinking from CMT and it is central to what I use as my foundation for thinking about masculinity(-ies).

### 1.3.5.1.1 Hegemonic and Nonhegemonic Masculinities

Masculinity can manifest in what Connell (1995) refers to as hegemonic masculinity. In the context in which Connell (1995) writes, this refers to the culturally dominant ideal of “masculinity centred around authority, physical toughness and strength, heterosexuality and paid work” (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 83; Pattman *et al.* 1998: 128). Most importantly, use of this concept has always been intended to help conceptualise “how patriarchal relations are legitimated throughout society” (Messerschmidt 2012: 63). The notion of hegemonic masculinities, which forms a central part of this research, provides a way to understand the gender dynamics in all-male spaces like FG. Hegemonic masculinities as theorised by Connell (1995), refer to different constructs of masculinities that one may encounter, not restricted to a single social location. In addition, different contexts and social spaces might also have different forms of hegemonic masculinities present. “Hegemonic masculinities may also then refer to the broader structure of masculinities in society” (Punt 2017: 20). Crucially, these masculinities – at least in the hegemonic masculinities’ context – are organised into a hierarchical structure, according to which the “dominant” form of masculinity takes precedence in the broader society. This means that men would use this dominant form of masculinity as the norm to construct their own versions of masculinity. It also serves as the ideological basis from which masculinities in this hegemonic structure can police and subordinate forms of masculinity which do not accord with the hegemonic structure (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 832; Morrell 1998: 607-608). Critically, in order to keep the hegemony, there not only has to be policing of men, but also exclusion and discrediting of women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 844). It should be clear then that hegemonic masculinities are centred around the way masculinities are constructed and organised in social settings. This theoretical basis of understanding the concept of masculinities provided me with a springboard from which to make sense of the masculinities that exist at FG.

Theorists such as Connell and Morrell refer to four different forms of masculinity. These are dominant, complicit submissive, oppositional, and protest (Morrell 1998: 607; Punt 2017: 20). These categories will be applied initially to identify what kind of masculinities exist in the social space of FG. The point is to understand the gender production that happens in FG. Perhaps this could clarify further how people in this

context create and perform their identities. What will also be crucial to add to my understanding of masculinities and subsequent theorisation of hegemonic masculinities is the concept of nonhegemonic masculinities. This will help in improving my understanding of all the different forms of masculinities present in this social space. This is done through using these concepts of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities throughout my ethnography. My research aims to contribute to the thinking on masculinities, making gender complex in terms of identifying the different ways in which masculinity is performed. In FG masculinity is linked to being strong and tough. Furthermore, it is also a masculinity of care. For instance, at FG people help each other with weight lifting and tidying up the gym. Additionally, they also just listen to each other and take what others tell them seriously, such as struggling with drug addiction and seeking help to stop the addiction. The gender experience at FG is all caught up in different versions of masculinity. It is better to acknowledge this complex interplay of masculine constructions rather than a single understanding of masculinity.

Distinguishing between hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities is precisely the key to overcome ambiguity and confusion regarding masculinities (and possibly define them) in a given social context (Messerschmidt 2012: 72). The reason for this is, since the formulation of the concept by Connell (1995), the term “hegemonic masculinities” has been used very broadly. This construes what hegemonic masculinities mean specifically and is most likely to lead to confusion around data and the analysis of hegemonic masculinities. Additionally, the problem with hegemonic masculinity(-ies) is that it limits what men and boys can be. In FG opportunities arise that allows men and boys to develop better social skills to find ways not to be hegemonic. The notion to help and care for someone is not typically associated with hegemonic masculinity(-ies). Similarly, Frank's insistence on everyone is the gym respecting people equally, is more in line with nonhegemonic masculinity(-ies). I will discuss this in my ethnography. FG then has a mixture of hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinity(-ies), effected through the culture of celebrating being physically strong and tough, but also helping and caring sincerely for others. Nonhegemonic masculinities do not further legitimate patriarchal relations in society, but facilitate the rise of “equality masculinities directly: those that legitimate an egalitarian relationship between men and women, between masculinity

and femininity, and among men [themselves]" (Messerschmidt 2012: 73). In the need to determine nonhegemonic forms of masculinity lies the opportunity for my study to look at how "typical" theoretical notions of masculinity might not always apply. This "new" approach to research on hegemonic masculinities by including nonhegemonic masculinity provides an opportunity for my research. It will be useful to use the categories of both hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities to assess and re-assess continually what the masculinity constructs mean in FG theoretically. In addition, it is quite likely that the identification and use of nonhegemonic masculinities in FG will prove even more beneficial to show how masculinities are constructed in this environment.

As I have made clear earlier, in this study I work with the idea that masculinities are neither fixed nor predetermined; even hegemonic masculinities may differ according to context. This implies that hegemonic masculinities can have different manifestations depending on the social field you are looking at – not all contexts where hegemonic masculinities exist will have the same definition of hegemonic masculinities. Rather, within a space like the gym, masculinities will emerge that are variable and dynamic in the sense that they are socially constructed and negotiated repeatedly:

Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 836).

Masculinities, therefore, contain various embodied practices, characteristics, beliefs, and routinised institutional practices and symbols, which are generated in specific situations within a structure of varying relationships (Bird 2008: 7; Morrell 1998: 607; Punt 2017: 21). This discussion serves as a theoretical basis for the approach I took to understanding masculinities at FG. Hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities present ways of understanding masculinity and the different forms they may take. Theorising masculinities in this way offers a lens through which one can view and make sense of a given social setting (in my context, FG). However, we must keep in mind that this is only a mechanism and tool for thinking about masculinity. Hegemonic and nonhegemonic masculinities are a way of making sense of masculinities.



## 1.4 Methodology

Access to FG was not a major challenge for me as I conducted my Honours research at this very same site. Frankie knows me very well and I would consider him to be my friend by now. Similarly, most of the regulars either still knew or remembered me. Also, the fact that I am a home language Afrikaans speaker and most people in this Coloured neighbourhood speak Afrikaans made communication easy. My love for weight training and solid understanding of it also played a major role in my being accepted quickly as one of the members. I focused on building good relationships with everyone in the gym by being friendly and respectful; participating in gym activities with everyone that wanted to be part of my research; and always listening to what anyone had to say and further engaging. However, even when one adheres to the university's REC rules for conducting fieldwork and maintaining reflexivity you cannot fully erase racial and socio-economic status associations in the South African context.

I would say that I was construed as a White, relatively affluent university student. One particular example that stands out for me is with one of the younger gym members who had completed his Grade 12 year and asked my advice on what he should pursue for his future. We ended up having quite a long conversation of where his interests lie and what routes he could follow for further study career wise.

Such conversations together with other informal conversations about weight training and "spotting" (the act of helping someone to lift a weight so that they do not injure themselves when they reach fatigue during a set) other members contributed to the fruitful relationships I built with the gym members. Most of the time everyone was talking to me like they would to their other friends – deliberately including me in their conversations, sharing jokes with one another, and further engaging in informal discussions around weight training. I feel that this effectively broke the rigid "researcher" and "participant" roles, which allowed for much richer ethnographic data collection for me and at least contributing something back to the participants. Examples are adding to conversations and jokes which the gym members really seemed to liked; giving advice to others about further career choices by sharing my knowledge of university systems and other study options which I had gone through myself in my Grade 12 year; helping others by sharing my knowledge of different exercises which they did not know about; and assisting some with their workouts



either as a workout partner or just helping to lift the weights to the exercise starting points. In this way I was reflexively aware of my social and economic status as a young White male and sought to break down the power dynamic's and societal stereotypes associated with it.

It is also worth noting that this research has been a great personal interest of mine. I have already mentioned my own love for weight training and that I had read the article about Frankie's Gym in 2013. This was my first year of studies before I changed course to a BA. I kept wondering about this gym and just how amazing it would be to experience all the different identities that come together, especially, with the fact of gangsters who had frequented the gym from around 2013, from what I could gather. There were not many active gangsters who trained at Frankie's Gym during my research times. Fast forward to my Honours year in 2017 when I had to come up with a small research project. What a delight it was for my own curiosity that lecturers I spoke to in the department encouraged me to use the gym as my focus. It was a difficult task as there is no address or means to contact Frankie's Gym; there are only some pictures that I found while doing a quick search and the name of an area, Rusthof. I spent a full Saturday morning driving around in the area to see whether I could find familiar-looking buildings. Eventually I asked two older men who were having a morning chat for directions. At first, they chuckled slightly as if they did not find it strange that a White male stranger was looking for Frankie's Gym. I got the impression that they thought, "ah, another one". They directed me and I finally found it. I was able to speak to Frank that day and I gave him the full explanation of what I was studying, why I would like to do my research project here, my personal interest in weight training, and curiosity about his gym. He sounded similarly intrigued by what I was wanting to do; he agreed happily and so my journey started.

I think personally I had developed much as a researcher over my research years. What I had known about research was only what we were taught in research methodology modules in my third year (2016) and honours (2017). I had actually never really done research before this. I was thrown out of my comfort zone in the sense that I had no idea what to expect. Would I be able to connect with people, build relationships, would they accept me as a White man coming into a predominantly Coloured area? To this day I am not sure how, but after the first time I

did research in 2017 things started to feel quite natural. I was training and trying to find connections to build rapport with people in the gym. Similarly, to my surprise, I was immediately accepted by some. We got talking not just about gym in general; but also my own life and social realities; Frankie's Gym; and their own lives and social realities. This resulted in my research actually developing into quite a pleasurable activity. I enjoy listening to people and talking with them. Sometimes it would be new training methods they had tried, and I shared my own experiences. Sometimes it would be about their struggles in having to deal with drugs and gangs in the area. There were many nights that I got home to my own room and just had to sit a bit and be thankful for what I have and recognise my own privilege. On other nights I would be writing my notes feeling quite shocked and dismayed at what some of the participants in my research actually had to go through – not just dealing with drugs, gangs and domestic abuse, but then also had to keep up with their studies and schoolwork. Conversations like these would usually occur when the gym is quieter, and the conversations could be kept between me and whomever was sharing. I had to approach these conversations reflectively. I felt that I did not want to build such close relationships that I was not able to uphold after my research was completed. This decision was in opposition to me wanting to empathise and grant the person a space to vent or talk through things. I felt it was part of me “giving back” to the gym as the older adults tended to engage in similar conversations with other gym members I became acquainted with throughout my research. Typically, these conversations were with people between 18 and 21 years old (younger than me as I am now 25). I then usually just listened and tried my best to empathise, but not to egg someone on, or talk in greater detail about such personal details which is not as important for my study. I tried my best to keep a professional relationship with my participants but also to actively break down the rigid researcher/participant roles.

However, I had changed and developed as a researcher. I had a much clearer sense of what to do and how to do it during my Master's research. I had learnt how to deal reflexively with my own positionality in order to make my participants (and myself) more comfortable. In my Masters research I tended to have much longer conversations with people in the gym and I would add topics of interest from my research questions to the conversations. Sometimes I would get very detailed and enthusiastically shared opinions on topics. At other times people might not really

engage and just talked about training or the day they had had. The most meaningful for me was how I learnt how to build relationships with people that barely know me. It is one thing to be at a party and make small talk to pass the time or to make new friends. It is completely different when having to build these relationships ethically in a research setting. I honed my empathetic skills in talking with people and I often found myself trying to understand someone's own social world very intensely that they were telling me about. I feel that this has improved my skills as a researcher, but also made me a better person as I actually find myself employing my research techniques in my personal life. Whether that is "surviving" in places where I know no one, or just understanding others better with whom I have close relationships. This was due to Anthropology methodology classes, but also, my natural development as a person. I have become more mature throughout my research and I have been learning more "life skills". In this case I do think my research has helped me understand how to build more relationships and friendships very effectively.

In short, my Masters research enabled me to spend much more meaningful time observing, participating and interacting at Frankie's Gym. I found myself relating much more to people than in my Honours research exactly because of this. But also, I started making more connections between Frankies' Gym and masculinities, sports-based interventions, and community literature.

#### 1.4.1 Research Methods

I used the anthropological research methods, ethnography and participant observation, in order to gather my data. I also received ethical clearance for semi-structured interviews. My sampling method was more in line with snowball sampling, since gym members do not always come to the gym every week on set days. In addition, since I had been doing research at the gym since 2017, most regulars knew me and would suggest that their friends come and talk to me. Similarly, Frank also regularly suggested people that I could talk to as possible participants. I also made use of applied thematic analysis when analysing my data. However, it was not necessary to do structured interviews with participants as I gathered more than enough data during my participant observation. I did, however, do an in-depth interview with Frank in order to ask him more specific questions about the gym, inquiring into things like the donations he has received.

### 1.4.1.1 Ethnography and Participant Observation

The use of participant observation proved an effective way to conduct my primary research. How could I not participate when I was at a gym? It was one of my main forms of gaining access to this space and it enabled me to start building relationships with my participants easily. I would always enter the gym, greeting everyone like every gym member does. I would also first talk to the regulars I had come to know before I started to interact with new people. This was not only to settle my own nerves, but also to show those who did not know me that I was not a complete stranger. I put up a research poster which helped people know who I was and what I was doing there (see Image 2).



*Image 2: My research poster in Frankie's Gym (on the right) (Photo: Jacques Punt).*

If I spoke to and interacted with someone who did not know me, I would always introduce myself first and explain what my purpose was in the gym, other than exercise. I was careful to approach people that had an “open” body language and seemed friendly enough to strike up a conversation. I did not want to disturb the natural flow of the gym. What helped me a lot is my own passion for weight training. I know all the gym rhetoric in any weight-training gym context, including specific terms (sets, reps, spotting), various exercises, and ways to structure your workout routine. This allowed me to become part of the natural gym flow and join conversations. It would have been very noticeable if I were to sit down and take notes while with someone and would also have made me uncomfortable. I would at most jot down keywords on my smartphone during any interaction I had while doing my research. I

always went straight home and recounted the events of the research and training session from start to finish. This was very effective and really made research fun. Regarding my selection of participant observation as my research methodology, everyone I interacted with enjoyed my company and always felt comfortable talking to me. As an example, when I spoke to Miss B, we ended up talking for a little over an hour, and the conversation was natural and flowed comfortably from one topic to the next. I would try to direct conversations I had to be in line with my research questions. Almost each time I went to do research, I also trained with someone while we were talking. I engaged in the typical gym etiquette of helping with gathering weights, helping to motivate the person I was training with, and assisting with completing an exercise movement if necessary (this is called giving someone a “spot”). All in all, participant observation as a research method proved extremely valuable and was central to the success of my research.

#### 1.4.1.2 Semi-structured Interviews

For my semi-structured interview, I kept to the ethical guidelines as ratified by the REC of the university. I set a date with Frank that was within his schedule and at a location he would be comfortable with. We did the interview at his home, in one of his bedrooms. He gave me permission to record the interview so that I could transcribe it later. He told me often that I could use his name in my research and he did not want a pseudonym, which is why I always refer to his real name. The questions I had planned were based on my primary research questions and I had the sense that Frank enjoyed answering them. One thing I did pick up on was that Frank felt slightly out of his comfort zone in a more formally structured conversation. I picked up on this immediately and asked him whether he wanted to stop. He assured me he was fine and after the second or third question he was talking to me very comfortably. Even though the semi-structured interview worked well, I would try to approach it differently in future.

#### 1.4.1.3 Applied Thematic Analysis

Applied thematic analysis (ATA) was the only data-analysis method that seemed appropriate for my research: as my research was completely qualitative in nature, it made more sense to focus on main themes and spontaneous ideas that emerged. ATA is “a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible” (Guest,

MacQueen, and Namey 2012: 15). ATA is essentially looking for main themes that emerge from the research. I compared the main themes identified in my research with my primary research questions in order to identify them, thereby drawing upon the strengths of this analytical approach to take the issues my participants raised in the context of their lives as men and women in and out of the gym. ATA enabled me really to get an in-depth understanding of my research data which allowed me to write about FG to the best of my ability.

## 1.5 Ethics

I am very aware of the ethics involved in conducting a research project. In every situation I found myself I made sure I complied with university's (REC) policies. I also conducted my research and myself as a researcher according to the professional and ethical guidelines of Anthropology Southern Africa (Anthropology Southern Africa 2020). I am a White male university student and I had to make sure that I was always aware of the effect of my venturing into a predominantly Coloured neighbourhood with a different socio-economic status than mine. There were no traces of racial or socio-economic tension. I am fluent in Afrikaans as it is my home language and most people in Rusthof speak Afrikaans which resulted in me being accepted. I also speak fluent English, which made it easy to communicate with those who did not speak Afrikaans. It thus was possible for me to build friendships and good relations with the people I met.

Although I try to anticipate every situation that may arise, I cannot always predict situations I find myself in. I have and will always assess any situation with the ethical guidelines in mind to ensure that no participants are harmed because of or during my research. Throughout my research, I made it clear that people could withdraw their consent without any consequences at any point and that I would discard any data I had of them as participants unless they gave me permission to use it. Fortunately, this never happened, but everyone was always aware of their rights as participants.

As I mentioned in my methodology section, I always ensured everyone knew who I was and my purpose at the gym. I also put up a research poster of myself to this effect at the gym. I added that they had a choice in whether to participate or not, and if they would like to participate, to talk to me. In this way, people who were interested but did not want to talk to me also knew what was going on. I put up my contact details so that everyone at the gym also knew how and where to contact me. I



always ensured that everyone was aware of who I was and what I was doing there during observations and participation. This was my way of mediating informed consent for my participant observation research method. The reason was that it was not possible for me to keep track of exactly whom I had spoken to and to make sure they signed a form. It would break the natural flow and atmosphere of the gym. I suggested this way of doing my participant observation in my ethics application and it was approved. As noted, it was very effective in helping me obtain data, but also gave power to the research participants. I also received informed consent from Frank before I started the interview.

I used Frank's real name as he requested that I do this. Additionally, I assigned pseudonyms to each participant whose data I had used. This was done not only to protect their anonymity, but also to be respectful of the information they had shared with me.

I also engaged with the adolescent high school group between the ages of 14 and 17. As per my ethics application, I made sure that Frank was always at the gym when I was there. I gave the same introduction to them as I did to everyone and specified their rights as research participants. They could also clearly see my research poster and most that I talked to already knew of me through my poster. I also only made some keyword notes on my smartphone which I then used to write up my observations at home. As with the adults, I only spoke to those who seemed open to conversation and limited the conversation to the gym and my research questions. Ultimately, it was not necessary for me to conduct interviews with any of them.

Lastly, I do think it was and still is ethically important for me to recognise FG as the intervention it posits itself as. The Rusthof community always gave me the impression that FG is doing "good" in their community. This was part of my ethical obligation in doing this research. I was critically evaluating the gym, but never forgot what effect the gym has had on the community prior to my research.

## Chapter 2: Putting Frankie's Gym in context

### 2.1 The “House of Pain”

On arriving at Frank's house one sees a sign above his garage: Frankie's Gym. At the bottom right corner of this sign is a little phrase which reads: “House of Pain” (refer to Image 3). This refers to the idea that a body is shaped to accept pain. In this context it is a type of “positive pain”: the pain you might feel from training at Frankie's Gym (FG) without the typical negative side-effects one might get if one thinks of pain as a concept. Bodies are shaped here to accept this kind of pain in order to create and produce a certain kind of body (Howe 2004: 84-86). I would always sit in my car and take in the ambience around the gym and Frank's house. It is a mixture of conversations between people walking in the street, the distinct sound of metal clanging in the gym, music being played through the gym speakers, sometimes the



*Image 3: The sign of Frankie's Gym at Frank's house (Photo: Jacques Punt).*

aroma of dinner being cooked, and the unmistakeable tang of the salty ocean air. If ever you have been in a gym or around weight training equipment, the sound of metal clanging mixed with music should be familiar. This is much the same as Klein (1993: 22) came across in his research, “[t]he sound[s] of construction – steel on steel”. On entering the gym, it was like going into a typical middle-class gym (think Virgin Active or Planet Fitness) that had load shedding. There is no aircon and the



garage door is also open when the gym itself is open. Humid and hot air mixed with sweat assaults your nose. I always thought of FG (and my own gym for that matter) as a construction site. The reason is that those in the gym are constantly trying to work further and build on their body projects. It also comes as no surprise that you also hear the distinct shouted motivational words that you would encounter at any gym: “That’s it”, *Nog net een* (which translates as “just one more”). To this end, this gym most certainly was the same as my own gym, but also very different. I am a member at a typical middle-class gym.

As I mentioned in my introduction, Virgin Active is a very good example of a typical middle-class gym, and in many ways, even upper-class gyms. These gyms are generally in a large building with a parking lot. There is security control at the entrance desk, restricting access to those who pay membership fees. Inside are areas designated for specific types of training: weight-training area; cardio-equipment area; functional training open space; sometimes a swimming-pool; water fountains; possibly a steam room or sauna; and if you are lucky a little coffee shop or health food restaurant. These gyms also have large men’s and women’s restrooms. There are lockers where you can leave your stuff, showers, and obviously toilets.

FG, on the other hand, looks very different. Because of its limited size and the fact that it is in Frank’s garage space, there are no restrooms. If you want to use the toilet, you have to ask Frank permission to use his home one. Water is kept in big containers filled by one of the children in Frank’s house throughout training hours. FG has also recently obtained a fridge that someone donated which now is in the gym, full of water containers and bottles that allow cold water to be readily available. FG, because of limited space, has only one area for the weight, cardio, and a functional training area. There are no access restrictions and gym fees are very low at R70 (this is the new 2019 price). The only reason Frank has membership fees is to help him pay water and electricity bills. He also mentioned to me his leniency about membership fees as he knows some people have it tough financially throughout the year. The weights and benches are about two-thirds of the way into the structure, all along the walls, which leaves some open space in the middle of the garage area (refer to Image 4). The cardio equipment is right in front at the garage doors (refer to Image 5). If you want to do a type of functional training, you must do it either just outside the gym walls or go at a quiet time when there is some free space

in the gym area. FG has the essential equipment one needs in a gym: cardio equipment comprises a couple of spinning bikes and a treadmill; for weight training, there are some benches and some that you can set at an incline; a cable pulley machine; assorted dumbbells; a wooden rack mounted on the walls with set weight barbells; loose barbells that can be loaded with weight plates; a collection of different weight plates; one squat rack; a leg-press machine; dipping bars mounted on the wall; and a home-gym rope pulley machine that someone donated on which you can do various exercises. What impressed me was that Frank had to construct some of the machines and dumbbells himself. He created a chest exercise machine out of scrap metal pipes and some dumbbells still have the weld spots visible. He used a piece of a thin metal pipe about the width of your hand and welded equal weight plates to either side. The same applies to some barbells – only with barbells he used slightly thicker metal pipes and rods that can handle heavier weights. These are ingenious solutions, as there is simply no financial capital to buy any expensive weight equipment. Lastly, there is a speaker bar mounted halfway into the gym on one of the cross-beams of the roof. This speaker is connected to a media centre where the music controls are. When I was doing my research, I would mostly hear African genre music being played but anyone can play anything. As it is a communal space, you first must have the majority vote in your favour. The music helps to create an atmosphere for everyone's workouts, essentially creating the "psych" needed to sustain your workout intensity. "Psych [is described as an] elevated mood to fit the level of activity" (Klein 1993: 12). What was particularly interesting to me is that there are no mirrors in FG, unlike in any middle-class gym I have visited. Usually people use mirrors to help them make sure their form in doing exercises is correct. FG was a good anthropological example of making the familiar unfamiliar. The gym felt familiar and what I am used to, but at the same time very different.



Image 4 (left): View from open garage door – cardio equipment in front (Photo: Jacques Punt).



Image 5 (right): View as you step into the gym through the door (Photo: Jacques Punt).

## 2.2 How the Gym Physically Operates

Having outlined the context of Rusthof, the area in which FG is located, it is also important to explain how FG functions as a gym every day. Frank is not only the owner, but also acts as the only real “employee”. The gym does not have any employees, and most people who train here try to assist Frank in any possible way. This includes finding weights or machines for the gym; opening and closing the gym; refilling the water bottles in the gym; and even just assisting with people’s workouts.

The gym has specific training times and is open from Monday to Friday in the mornings and afternoons. The gym is open on some Saturday mornings, although this can change, depending on Frank’s schedule. During the week, the gym is typically open in the morning between 6 and 7 am. Similarly, during the week, the gym is open in the afternoons from 2 to 8.30 pm. The main reason for this is the small, intimate size of the gym and the fact that adolescents use the gym after school. Teenage children are only allowed to train during this specific timeslot as they are at school in the mornings and need to do homework after school. Frank strictly enforces this: one evening, as I arrived for a session, some school children were still at the gym after 6 pm. Frank scolded them, told them never to let it happen again and sent them home to finish their homework. He emphasised that it was almost exam time. His influence on the children in the neighbourhood is considerable, as he takes this “work ethic”, and the balance of exercise and school, very seriously.



*Image 6a: View from half-way into the gym. This is the typical scene you will encounter when training in the adult evening timeslot (Photo: Jacques Punt).*



*Image 6b: View from half-way into the gym. This is the typical scene you will encounter when training in the adult evening timeslot (Photo: Jacques Punt).*

FG also provides “studio classes” as most middle-class gyms do. This, however, is done at the local church hall which is just around the corner from the gym. Frank presents the classes, which range from aerobics and Tae Bo® to Zumba™ classes. It is worth noting that most female gym members prefer these aerobics or “cardio” classes to the weight training done in the garage where FG resides. “Cardio” refers to cardiovascular exercises based on the principle of controlled vigorous movement to increase your heart rate. Cardio also includes running and cycling. This results in burning more calories and is used typically to increase fitness levels, as well as playing a vital role in toning the muscles in the body (essentially making muscles appear larger and burning off excess fat).



*Image 7: Barbell-rack in the back right-hand corner of the gym. There are also promotional posters for upcoming and past bodybuilding competitions (Photo: Jacques Punt).*



Additionally, I think it is important to elaborate on why studying a weight training gym is useful. Contemporary understandings of the “gym” and weight training are not always positive. This is especially the case for men who are either interested in bodybuilding or make use of bodybuilding training techniques. Assumptions may include views such as that bodybuilding is based on a heteronormative “Western” masculinity which has roots in hyper-masculinity – which marginalises not only femininities and women, but also, queer, and subaltern masculinities (Boswell 2016: 385). In addition, some may even criticise the very environment of the gym, stating that this is a space where the production of vacuous and meaningless self is promoted, alongside, a greater “ideological narcissistic development” linked to the “urge to aestheticize modern life” (Boswell 2016: 385). This may be one way of looking at the gym, but it fails to consider a different perspective. Gyms can be sites where other kinds of cultures and communities originate and then permeate back into the wider sociality in which the gym itself is located. Additionally, this is a very one-sided view of bodybuilding and the type of exercises associated with it. This type of exercise can be used in many ways. Bodybuilders for one utilise weight training for their profession in order to build up their bodily muscles to achieve a specific aesthetic. Yes, the aesthetic they would strive for tends to be a hyper-masculine version associated with hegemonic masculinity, but that is not what I am discussing in this thesis. What is important to my argument is the type of exercise being used (weight training) and the sense of community which a gym can create. In fact, the practice and practices associated with bodybuilding can be even more useful for marginalised people in society. Boswell (2016: 385-386) for instance, made it clear that bodybuilding does not necessarily produce racist stereotypes, but on the contrary may reconstitute (Black) identities in empowering ways. For example, muscular Black female bodies may signal subversion of dominant discourse (Boswell 2016: 386). This can be done in subtle, yet very effective, ways. In a heteronormative world where women are expected to represent “appropriate” heterosexual beings, bodily dissent is a way in which to counter hegemonic discourses and practices of how one is expected to be and represent yourself (Boswell 2016: 386). For instance, women having visibly-defined muscles goes against the expected hegemonic view that women must look “soft” and petite. Bodybuilding, or weight training, is a way of “producing an alternatively but still physically inscribed self, a palpable, texturised entity that is visible, tactile and communicative” (Boswell 2016:

386). In this sense bodybuilding, weight training, and the “gym” can present us with greater understandings of people and their identities. Boswell (2016: 392) noted that it was clear that the bodybuilders participating in her research used weight training, bodybuilding practice and the gym as a way to present an alternative yet contemporary Black manhood. In doing so, they created a Black male identity removed from the association of Black manhood with township life and the disempowerment that is linked to it (Boswell 2016: 392). Utilising weight training and the “gym” can then be a very useful tool for people who are marginalised and stereotyped, to construct new identities - identities that break free from these stereotypes and marginalised limitations imposed upon them.

### 2.3 The Rusthof Neighbourhood

FG is situated in a predominantly Coloured space in a Coloured neighbourhood (Statistics South Africa 2019b). It has become an important and integral site in the social world of people living here. It is not only a gym, but a meeting place, a safe space (both literally and more figuratively in terms of talking about problems), and for those related to Frank, it is home.

If Frank is at home, you will find him in his lounge/TV room, or standing behind his security gate, gazing outside, or in front of the gym talking to passers-by. On a typical day in Rusthof in the vicinity of FG, there are children playing and riding their bicycles. In fact, once I saw a homemade scooter made from plywood with two grocery-trolley wheels. I have never encountered such an ingenious solution to making something like this with what-have-you if you cannot afford to buy one – it was strong and durable! There also are teenagers and young adults strolling with friends, some going to the tuck shop located behind Frank’s house. There are adults returning from work, and some walking with their children. What I always find interesting is that probably one in two people passing Frank’s house and the gym greet him: “Hallo Frank” and “Hallo Oom Frankie” are the two most common greetings. Those who know Frank more personally will always come and have a quick chat and crack a joke. If you walk into Frank’s yard it is not long before he sees you and immediately comes to say hello. This happened to me every time I attended the gym and it really made me feel at home. This behaviour was not exclusive to me. Frank usually stands at the entrance to the gym, almost like a bouncer at a night

club, and greets everyone who enters. He welcomes everyone and typically cracks a joke with those he knows well.

This gym creates more than just your typical social space and confluence of people in a neighbourhood. Conversations that happen here are about any number of topics, from different types of exercises; how someone's day was; problems someone might be having, whether very serious or not; and even about something like employment for people in the neighbourhood. I had a conversation with Mr C about this while we were training. He noted that Black people seem to have more job opportunities at the local supermarket than Coloured people, "We are struggling against the Black people. They get most of the job opportunities." He went on to say that he wanted to walk into the supermarket one day and take a video to show the preponderance of Black workers. He felt that because it was a predominantly Coloured neighbourhood that there should be more Coloured workers. He was aiming to become a taxi driver, but even that had its issues. "Say, for instance, you are a taxi driver and you are busy driving around here. The gangs, they will just climb aboard and rob you! And you do not have a choice, you must pay them money. You must give them a 'tax'." So, even in his case, where he really is trying to make an honest living, unemployment is looming. This is because in the case of a taxi driver, the daily income constitutes the wage. As soon as someone starts taking a cut of that, financial security is threatened. At FG one talks about many different topics. In this example with Mr C, we barely even touched on anything gym and exercise-related.

#### 2.4 The Gym, Gangsterism, and "the Street"

Through conversations and interacting with people here, you get a good insight into what life is like in this neighbourhood. One of the main reasons this gym was started was to address the issue of gangsterism in the area. At FG you will not necessarily find that people talk about gangs and gangsters explicitly. In the same conversation as the one above I asked Mr C more about gang activity in the area.

We had been conversing for a while and I saw an opportunity to ask my question. My question was on what he had been talking about earlier, the fact that some people cannot enter a certain part of the neighbourhood because of the gangs. Interestingly, before he proceeded to tell me, he scanned the gym quickly, saying that he could tell me, but couldn't speak loudly. This was to ensure that there were no gangsters or



ex-gangsters nearby who could hear what he was saying. Mr C said after his scan of the gym that he might be reprimanded, should someone who was a gangster have heard him speak. Mr C said that the most active gang in the area is the SOS'e. This abbreviation stands for the gang, *Sons of Satan*, and the way I quoted it is how everyone at FG pronounced it in Afrikaans. Recently the gang members of the SOS'e have rejected the current leadership of the gang and they are loyal to someone else within the SOS'e. Keeping this in mind, gangs typically have very specific "turf" on which they operate. He specifically mentioned this divide and the current ongoing power struggle, as it had implications for the whole neighbourhood. People not part of this gang don't really know where "safe or neutral" zones are. For those more involved, it is even more confusing and complicated, as they don't have clarity on where they can move freely. The fact that gangs have their own "turf" and that everyone in the neighbourhood knows where it is, influences the social realities of the people living here. For instance, you will have to take a different route when you walk to a nearby shop; to or from school; where you can play with friends; or even where to ride your bicycle. Luckily, this confusion surrounding the leadership of the SOS'e and "turf" subsided a little while after Mr C related this. However, there are still daily limits for everyone in the neighbourhood because of the gangs and their "turf". This just highlights the fluctuating and fluid nature of the community of Rusthof.

In a different conversation, Miss B, as many others, told me that the gym plays a very important role in the lives of the youth in the neighbourhood, acting as a buffer to being "on the street". Miss B told me this while she was busy with her workout one evening. The gym was quite busy and she was the only woman present that evening. It was good to be able to talk to her, since when there were some women in the gym they typically tended to avoid me. Whether this was because of my positionality as the White student researcher, or that they just were not comfortable talking to a male they do not know, is difficult to say. I respected their choice when they did not want to engage with me. Miss B's comment about the "street" is significant, since the "streets" represent most of what people think are the "bad stuff" in the neighbourhood, because many of the nefarious activities that take place in Rusthof happen on the "streets". This is evident though the selling of drugs, gang shootings or any other gang activity taking place in public, and even just petty crime.

Miss B, as almost everyone I spoke to, has the opinion that “the gym is a way to get the young people off the ‘streets’ and to do something productive with their time”. She added that, it “[helps] them stay away from the ‘bad stuff’ in the community”. Miss B gave an interesting account of what the gym does for people who come to train here. “[T]he gym just does something good for you – not just physically keeping you healthy, but also keeps you mentally healthy [‘good or positive’ thoughts; focused on your work; and keeps you in a good routine]”. For Miss B, when people subscribe to the gym, it fosters a capacity to keep them (especially the youth) mentally as well as physically healthy with a focus on work ethic. This idea of fostering a “good” work ethic is important as that is what Frank really does try to instil in gym members. I do believe that the idea of a work ethic can be applied to almost everything in a person’s life, whether doing your training effectively (like doing your workout in a set time, eating healthy foods); maintaining your training programme/schedule; if you are employed, doing your job to the best of your ability; doing your homework every day; studying for your tests; helping around your house with cleaning and cooking; and even just making sure you give yourself some time for yourself. The notion of instilling a “good” work ethic has proved quite effective, as almost everyone I spoke to and interacted with always told me how the gym had helped them.

In a similar conversation, Mr T explained that the gym helps people who are on the “streets”. He said that when people, especially the youth, come to train, it stops them from getting up to mischief. This can include smoking, doing drugs, and abusing alcohol. He mentioned two ways in which members keep coming to train here and subsequently stay out of “trouble”. Firstly, he spoke about the gym keeping your *moed* up. This is an Afrikaans word that in this context means that the gym helps you to maintain your courage. Mr T gave the example of himself:

He is a panel beater and someone who works with cars; on top of this he has just recently had a second child with his wife. He said that because of this, his *moed* isn’t always high because he is tired and spread thinly owing to many duties and responsibilities. The gym (and probably more, the people in it) helps to maintain his *moed* and keep him motivated.

So, in his first explanation, he is touching on something which almost everyone faces in their everyday lives: that we all are very busy and have many responsibilities, such as a child(ren) to care for; being the main earner in a household; or even having

homework, assignments, and exams for school. He spoke about *moed* in the sense that everyone has a multitude of things that influence our *moed*. FG and the people that use it help one another to stay focused on what they are doing in their lives, and through this, maintain their *moed*. Secondly, Mr T spoke about him usually taking a small group of children under his wing at the gym. These would typically be boys in high school. They joined Mr T because he himself is a teacher and he wants to help children. Also, usually when there are children or adolescents at the gym who want help, Frank would refer them to someone like Mr T. He would act as their personal trainer. He did not mention it specifically, but the practice at this gym usually includes that people talk about whatever is going on in their lives with one another – whether it is good or bad. So, Mr T almost certainly would have known if the youngsters were struggling with substance abuse, domestic violence or abuse at home, and whether they were in a good state of mental health. When older men did this (Mr T is 33 years old), they would not only assist the youngsters with training and training advice, but also try to assist with other issues. Essentially, it shows that when you are someone's (especially the youth's) personal trainer, you will most probably help them stay on the "right" path. Mr T also added that even in his case, when working with the kids, some still tended to fall away after a while. Mr T said, they stopped coming to the gym and became involved with the "bad stuff" – like smoking cigarettes and perhaps even doing drugs.

## Chapter 3: Frankie's Gym as a Sport-based Intervention

I have already explained what a sport-based intervention (SBI) is in my theoretical framework. It is, however, important to show how FG situates and continually functions as an SBI. In FG's functioning as an SBI, the focus is of course on working with people engaged in anti-social and criminal activities. Even though this is true, FG is also a unique SBI for being a place that accepts people for whoever they are – regardless of their social behaviour and activities, whether in a gang, struggling with drugs and alcohol abuse, or even just a “normal” kid in high school.

Frank has been, and still is, the most important person behind this drive for the gym to function as it does. In an interview with him, I asked why he thought the gym worked so well. Frank proceeded to tell me that after his son passed away, he somehow just knew that he had to talk to the gang members that had attacked his son. In fact, he took these gang members (part of the Schoolboys) out for a meal to talk:

They were in tears; they then told me sometimes they do stuff and they want to talk to their parents and then their parents tell them that they [the parents] don't have time to listen to them now [...]; and that is when they told me that they look for other ways of getting attention. Then I thought to myself, man, is there not something I can do to help – that is when I started with the freestyle dancing groups.

This freestyle dancing group was called the Professionals, and Frank added that they danced all over Cape Town and the Cape Winelands district. He mentioned competitions in Bellville and Paarl. They practised in Frank's friend's garage. Frank stressed that they danced at “gold” level and that the dance group really helped, but he still felt it was not enough. The “help” that Frank referred to here is that the dancing served the same purpose as the gym now does. This implies that it assisted with keeping them “off the streets” by staying active and having something to do. Frank then conceived the idea of creating the gym at his home to try to do more to help. His idea has led to getting his gym to where it is today and to help more people. Another reason was that the dance group had substantial financial costs which they struggled to cover, like admission fees and new clothes for every competition.

Frank emphasised that he felt he needed to help these kids – he felt that he needed to “win them over”. Frank told me, “The people [in the neighbourhood] kept on telling

me, 'Frankie, put the kids in jail'. I told them no, 'Why should I?' I told them, if I send them to jail, what will become of them? I lost a son ... but I helped a lot of kids out of trouble – especially where they could be influenced by larger more established gangs and that would've resulted in them doing more [wrong] things." This is how he got a small Wendy house (3m by 9m) in his backyard and officially started the gym. Initially, he got two different gangs to train at his gym, the Schoolboys, and the Americans. These two gangs and their names are specific to the Rusthof neighbourhood. If there are other gangs with similar names in South Africa, they are not affiliated with each other. Naturally, there were other people from the neighbourhood who also came to train because of the open-door policy of FG. However, Frank's larger focus is to help decrease gang violence and eventually persuade the gangs to disband. It is interesting that there were no fights when the gang members from various gangs trained at the gym. Frank talks about having a lot of respect from the gangs and it seems as if the gym acts as a kind of "neutral zone". Frank told me about one interaction he had with the Schoolboys and the Americans one day at the gym:

One day I called all of them together [at the gym]. I ... asked them, "Are you gangsters?" They replied, "Yes we are the Schoolboys and the Americans." I told them, "No, you aren't gangsters." I told them, "If you were gangsters, you would've wanted to fight each other in here. Then they looked at each other, and I told them [to] make peace with each other. Then they took each other's hands. From then on, they came to the gym together. There wasn't anything more of the Americans or so on. And like that I got them, to this day, many of them are still "converted". Many of them are married now and still not part of a gang anymore.

This interaction that Frank had might not have been the precise moment at which the two gangs ceased to exist; it does show, however, how Frank worked with them and over time helped them to think differently about who and what they are. Frank is still proud of the fact that neither the Americans nor the Schoolboys still exist. Important to remember that these two gangs were never affiliated with others which may be of the same name in the Cape Flats or other area. Moving on however, this is especially true, I think, because it means that there are fewer people who will have to suffer what he did with the death of his son. The gym, therefore, breaks down gang polarities and diminishes fighting and violence as expressions of masculinity, without the participants in the gym necessarily realising this.

Frank and some of the older adults I could speak to at the gym have told me that for them, since the inception of FG, there has been a feeling that the neighbourhood is doing “better”: there is less gang-related crime, even if only to a certain extent. Adding that, the youth in the neighbourhood tend to be more committed to finishing school and much less interested in using substances (whether drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes) – “making something of themselves.” I understand that to definitively prove this there will require a much deeper investigation. Proof would include establishing the drop out rates of the nearby schools; looking into Police statistics on crime; and following up with those that are “making something of themselves”. Unfortunately, it is rather difficult to get numbers and figures of for such a small poorer neighbourhood. In addition, South African Police Services statistics are known for being unreliable, especially on reporting of crime. In a certain sense I am critical of the claims made by Frank and the people at FG as I wanted to see the proof. However, what I can confirm is that there is this perceived feeling that FG is “helping”. So, to make the claim that FG has actually accomplished such goals is not meant as objective factual statements. Rather, if people perceive that FG is helping the community with getting some to stay away from crime, drugs, and gangs, I think such personal claims are difficult to dispute. At least, these experiences are felt to be true by those who continue to come train or seek help (or both). In the same interview with Frank, he told me that what had drawn many more people to the gym was when they saw what he had accomplished with the gangs. This is how the gym membership grew, and Frank has had the opportunity to influence more people in the neighbourhood. He has been running the gym to make everyone feel part of one whole. Additionally, all who trains here are equal and all are here to help one another, whether with training, just being someone to talk to, or helping someone struggling with substance abuse or addiction. Frank added, “People are so happy when they are here [and] it is just fantastic how the gym just grows and grows and grows.” That the gym adds to people’s happiness just adds to the success FG has had as an SBI. People enjoy using this gym and it makes it easier for them not only to exercise, but also to help one another when they attend. Frank said this in the same interview: “I’ve seen how people change, man. Many kids, many adults also. Men that drink and they get off of it, they don’t drink anymore; and problems in their houses get resolved. Women came to thank me, saying how their men have changed in their houses!” According to Frank, abuse against women has also

declined and one of the ways he has helped is by getting the man and woman to exercise together. In cases like these, they tend to go to the aerobics classes at the church hall; as Frank has said himself, women in the area tend to prefer aerobics classes to weight training. “I tell them to come gym together or come to the Tae Bo classes together – and it happens! There is peace in their houses. And they enjoy it!” Although there might not be specific programmes as some SBIs might have, Frank works more personally with the people in the neighbourhood and makes suggestions on what to do on a case-by-case basis.

FG has apparently been so successful that parents send their children to the gym, knowing that Frank (and FG) will do his best to help them. One of the things Frank is proudest of is that he has helped many get off drugs:

No, I must be honest, I have taken many off drugs. A lot a lot a lot. Girls, boys, many. Married men also, hey. And I must say I am proud of it. I feel proud when I see the difference. And many of the guys, they went to go “stand” at bodybuilding competitions, hey. And they got WP colours [provincial colours] for it.

It is important to note that many people he helps tend to get some form of reward. If Frank were to focus on someone specific, he would also train them in the gym. He ensures that they exercise effectively. Frank acts as their personal trainer, and as quoted, they go on to compete in bodybuilding competitions. That people achieve provincial colours when Frank helps them is not only a reward and recognition for hard work, but also serves as inspiration to others - others in the neighbourhood who might be in a similar position see that it is possible to quit (in this case drug abuse), and do something else, or just realise that there is a way out. The way Frank has been running the gym and has implemented a more specific “work ethic” has had a great influence on its success.

While talking to Miss B, I got some insight into how the gym has attained such success in working with people from the community. She said that the gym [and “gyming” – so exercise in general] does something “good” for you. “[It not only] keeps you physically healthy, but also keeps you mentally healthy [with] ‘good’ or ‘positive’ thoughts; [keeps] you focused on your work; and [makes you follow] a ‘good’ routine.” These were just some aspects she listed and there could be many more benefits. Miss B was pointing out that besides the physical benefits of exercise, coming to FG also instils a specific kind of “work ethic”. Through exercising, you tend to promote positive thoughts about yourself – you feel and look “good”. In addition,



with regular exercise, you possibly focus more on your work, whether your job or schoolwork. Having a “good” routine means you will have to structure your day, if you are doing different things. So, you will have to set times for exercise, doing schoolwork or housework, and even doing daily tasks like grocery shopping. In this sense, the gym helps you to structure your day to complete every task and use your time effectively. I really understood what she meant as I have experienced this myself since I started actively “gyiming” since my first year of undergraduate studies. This “work ethic” that FG helps create among its gym members is also clear through something as simple as the rules for training times. School children (essentially those 18 and under) must be out by 5.30 pm for them to have adequate time to do their homework. Similarly, the adults (those 18 and over) can come to train only between 6 and 8.30 pm. This leaves enough time to help around the house or even spend time with their children, should they have any. In both age groups, there is little time to participate in anti-social or criminal behaviour as the day is structured and leaves no time for idleness. Indirectly this promotes a sense of purpose. As soon as you wake up in the morning, you know what you must do and when you are supposed to do it. This then reduces the harm that drugs and gangs are able to exert on your life in this neighbourhood. It helps teach people self-discipline and self-control. This is done as you must take your own initiative to follow through with your daily schedule, something that not all people are taught to do. I do think that this is probably one of the main reasons that FG has had such success since its inception. Everybody at the gym works together to keep one another committed to attending the gym regularly; they support one another in refraining from anti-social or criminal activity; and keep one another motivated to do whatever they may be doing to the best of their ability.

It was also interesting talking about supplements at FG while conducting my research and thinking about how the gym acts as an SBI. I experienced that when gym members talked about something like steroids, it was not in the same stigmatised way as with other drugs. Steroids are technically illegal substances but many people use them. I have heard talk of steroids at almost every gym I have ever attended, as well as in conversations outside the gym. In a conversation between two guys with whom I was training they had a spirited debate, with one making a strong case for the use of steroids. He mentioned the increased strength and muscle

that can be built. He was using a supplement for almost everything you can imagine – something to take before a workout (pre-workout): creatine, whey protein, and possibly even something to assist weight loss. The other person (Mr X) took the exact opposite line: he clearly thought this was the “wrong” way to “gym”. The main reason he gave was that “hard work” trumps all the supplements you could take. Training very rigorously and effectively will result in your achieving greater muscle tone and strength in the long run. Mr X said that almost everyone using so many supplements gets the short end of the stick when they stop training. He said, “Then everything falls flat and you are deflated,” indicating with his hands from his shoulders, past his stomach, down to his knees. Mr X added, “You see, I don’t use supplements and when I stop exercising everything just stays there, nothing falls flat and deflates.” Mr X was talking about one of the side effects of using steroids and excessive supplements like this. When you stop exercising, even for a short while, you could lose muscle mass and strength. In such a context a person will sometimes even look “fatter”, because of increased water retention, and they lose muscle size and definition. However, using supplements to assist you in your training could be very beneficial. For example, using a pure whey protein will stimulate the growth of lean muscle in your body. Lean muscle describes physical muscle fibres and muscle mass in your body. Therefore, the stimulation of growth of lean muscle will not only make your muscles bigger, but also improve strength and muscle definition. There are thus pros and cons to taking supplements; it really depends on how they are used. It is interesting to link this to FG as an SBI. Supplements are expensive and a luxury; most people can barely afford to buy regular whey protein. Steroids and pre-workouts are even more expensive. Thus, at FG supplements might be viewed as something aspirational. Those who train here might want to get a supplement and would have to work hard and save in order to buy it. It could then in turn help focus people and give them some impetus, as they have something to work towards. At the same time, the gym has seen the introduction of supplements and steroids, a “new” type of drug. FG and its members will have to be wary of supplements to avoid succumbing to a new type of addiction. So far, I have experienced that members do help to keep one another in check, so that the use of supplements does not spiral out of control and become part of the drug problem in the neighbourhood.

### 3.1 Limitations of Frankie's Gym as a Sport-based intervention

However, one of the big limitations of such a gym-based intervention is that it will not appeal to everyone. Similarly, the trend one finds at FG is that it is a highly masculinised space; few women or girls come to participate at FG. These considerations point to some of the limitations of intervention programmes like FG to open up gender mixed recreational spaces in a context still characterised by the legacy of apartheid and continuing structural inequalities emanating from it. Salo (2007), alluded to the fact that owing to the historical context of Apartheid South Africa, many predominantly Coloured areas around Cape Town (like the Cape Flats and Manenberg) are unfortunately plagued by structural inequalities. These can include physical inequalities like poor infrastructure, socio-economic-related like high unemployment especially among men, and restricted access to quality education which in turn leads to higher illiteracy levels. Important to remember here, as I mentioned in the background section, is the proximity of Rusthof to the Cape Flats. Furthermore, the structural inequalities include gangsterism which in turn affects ways in which masculinities can be performed – especially, relating to physical and mental toughness. Linking back to hegemonic masculinities, men are expected not only to show they are physically “tough” but also that they are mentally “tough”. So, interventions like FG which has almost exclusively male gym members and promotes exercise which makes one physically “tough” may be limited in what they can achieve. Critically, this reproduction of “toughness” in FG can ultimately fail in its end goal. This is due to gym members having consistently to be mentally tough in resisting things like gangsterism and drugs. An example from a conversation with Mr C when he talked to me about this shows the difficulties with needing consistent mental toughness:

I went for a run and when I got close to my house one of my friends had just parked and got out of their car down the street. I didn't want him to see me [the reason being that he didn't want to deal with the peer pressure of doing drugs]. My friend closed his door and turned to me and I had no choice but to say “hello”. My friend greeted me back and then almost immediately asked, “wanneer gaan ons *roek* vandag? [when are we going to smoke today – in this case drugs]”. To which I replied that I wasn't really in the mood and was tired after my run. I was really just trying to come up with an excuse. My friend persisted a little longer but luckily, I had resisted.

What was worth noting is how Mr Cs body language changed while telling me this account. He had been quite energetic and in a happy mood previously while we were talking in the gym in between his sets. As he started talking his head dropped a little, even slouching his shoulders down, his speech slowed, and looked not only dismayed but just completely mentally tired. He continued saying that this was almost a daily reality for most young people in the surrounding community. So, even though you might have found a way to avoid drugs today – tomorrow you must do it again. It is also difficult as for most, these other young people are still very much their friends, people they grew up with and have known as neighbours. Also, many of them still attend the same school. If you do not participate or you resist all the time, you are losing friends – which in turn leads to less social interaction with others outside of your house. For many this is important as some are still suffering from physical and/or mental abuse at home.

Getting back to FG, having to deal with this consistent toughness against all the different social factors can really take its toll on people still wanting to be part of the intervention. In some sense coming to FG becomes a personal sacrifice. You will most likely lose friends and be excluded from social worlds which are important not only for friendship and relationship building. Additionally, in this context FG may be read as a male space, catering for what might be understood as male pre-occupations with an emphasis on physical and mental toughness. Therefore, one of FGs biggest limitations is its social context compounded by the structural inequalities in the neighbourhood which no one who still lives there can escape.

## Chapter 4: Building Community at Frankie's Gym

Since the inception of FG, it has served to help the neighbourhood of Rusthof. The gym has a critical role in helping to deal with issues the people of Rusthof face. It is not only a gym and venue for exercise, but also a place where people often meet and even come to find support. It truly has all the ingredients for a community and has been furthering community building in the neighbourhood. FG also focuses on building cultural, human, and social capital.

### 4.1 Building Social and Human Capital with Body Projects

In a sense FG is a type of special facility and not just a gym. "There are many times when it takes on all of the characteristics of a community" (Klein 1993: 21). FG is a smaller community of the larger community outside of its walls. I spoke to Mr B while training one evening:

The gym plays a very important role in many young kids' lives. Maybe not as much, but in many adults as well. Kids that start training here are inspired to follow a healthy lifestyle and are motivated to look good. This happens to many adults training here as well. And with the adults always training here, they are giving good examples and motivation to the youngsters. This keeps the kids and adults out of trouble and away from things they shouldn't be doing (drugs especially) (Punt 2017: 34).

This is linked to my thinking on body projects. "The body project implies that you must take care of your mental and physical well-being. Mentally, having to make active choices to not do drugs or get involved in crime" (Punt 2017: 34). This includes exercising continually and ensuring you follow your exercise routine. I argue that the adults at FG are setting a good example (like a role model) to others at the gym. A gym can create a lifestyle associated with it, which is naturally tailored to the specific needs of the men and women in its vicinity (Klein 1993: 14; Punt 2017: 35). Essentially, FG is stimulating the growth of human capital of the people who are gym members. I do think that those who are not gym members will also benefit, as gym members will go into the Rusthof community and indirectly, through social contact, also help others to improve their human capital.

Importantly, one of the factors that sets the tone for this gym to operate in terms of influencing not only human capital, but also social capital by using body projects, is space. Note my description of how small and intimate the gym is. This intimacy facilitates gym members' being able to connect with one another. Social capital is

important, as gym members will be building ties or connections with one another. Gym members are not obligated to interact with one another, but usual practice is that you will engage in conversation with others while you are training. Those who know one another very well (and live in the neighbourhood) will continually engage in conversation (Punt 2017: 35). Therefore, FG influences directly and tends to increase human and social capital. For instance, I would argue that the gym mediates the creation of a kind of masculinity that I would deem very positive, with the aim of being role models for not just other men, but for all in the community to live their lives in a responsible and “good” (positive) way.

FG then, has this unique social aspect to it that aims to help and care for its surrounding community in more ways than one (Punt 2017: 36). This social aspect of FG is important to most of the gym members and is also why people keep training here. Essentially, FG is helping to create a culture that influences people to work against perceived issues in the neighbourhood like crime, drugs, alcohol, and gangs. Mr O gave me a similar description while I was talking to him one time. “FG not only helps creates this lifestyle; it gives physical material examples with the people training there being viewed as role models” (Punt 2017: 36). One way to think about it is that FG is like going to your favourite pub with your friends (Klein 1993: 32). “Things will always be in their accustomed places, the same faces will greet you, happy to see you, and take the edge off a hard day on the outside [of the gym]” (Klein 1993: 32; Punt 2017: 36). Mr F would agree with this sentiment, as he told me one evening, “I don’t feel right if I don’t come and train.” It makes these men I spoke to feel good to train here. The gym serves the community in not only trying to help people improve physically and mentally (human capital), but also socially (social capital) (Punt 2017: 36).

## 4.2 Building the Frankie’s Gym Community

The body projects, and their incorporation of community capitals of gym members, serve as the basis for gym members to build the FG community within the larger Rusthof community.

In one conversation with Mr C, he asked me about the research I was conducting. I tried to give my best explanation of why FG was so interesting to me. Mr C almost interrupted me as he said, “Yeah, you’re right, this isn’t just a gym.” He then gave me his account of the gym. Mr C said, “This is not just a space to come and train, it is

also a place to come and talk to others, and everybody helps each other here – they look out for each other.” Once again, the sense of human and social capital being created at FG comes to the fore. Here it seems there is a type of FG culture being created – a culture that gym members help and care for one another. It became clear to me while doing my research that the gym members help one another a great deal. This entails motivating one another in the gym, but also includes helping one another in dealing with the emotional struggles everyone has in life. Mr C refers here to “looking out for each other”. This is central to the FG community and to each gym member’s body project. Almost everyone at FG knows one another as they live in the same area, go to the same schools, and even work at the same workplace. The people at FG obviously know all about the issues they face in life outside of the gym, whether at home or on the streets. This means they will help those struggling with drugs, smoking, or alcohol to quit. The gym members at FG act as an immediate support network. In almost every case, Frank will also be part of the support network. I have not been able to ask specifically how someone receives help; however, from talking to Frank and others at the gym, it appears that people will be given assistance with food; possibly shelter if there are issues at home; emotional support with struggles in dealing with quitting smoking, drugs, or gangs; advice on how to make sure you do not start any of the “bad stuff” again; and even help with school homework. I argue that the essence of the FG community resides in the creation of this helping and caring culture gym members have adopted. It is essentially how the community came to exist, as Frank himself started the gym because he wanted to help and in a way care for others in the broader community.

One way in which people at FG become part of this community within the broader Rusthof community is by exercising. A certain way to become part of and continue to be a part of this community is through exercising with everyone else in the gym. Most, if not all people in the gym, will have one person who takes the “lead” in their training regimes. Incidentally, some do train by themselves, but it is not that common; they might arrive alone but always tend to join a couple of people. The people who take the lead in training regimes tend to act as personal trainers. Personal trainers are people working in gyms, who can coach you with exercises tailored to your specific needs; help with nutrition tips such as diets and supplements; and are seen as the “experts” on weight training, for example. So,



those people at FG who act as personal trainers do not work there but fulfil the same purpose. You can see them delegating what exercise is next; helping to count reps; keeping up the intensity and regulating rest times; and of course, motivating everyone training with them. I have assumed this role in the gym as I have a broad knowledge of weight training and it is my favourite method of exercise. However, you are not obligated to stay with the same person who assumes this role at FG, you can always change. For instance, one evening while I was training, I saw Mr O with someone I had not seen before. Mr O was helping this young man as he only had started weight training for the first time two weeks prior to this encounter. Mr O told me after the new member had left: "I like training other people, you know. I like meeting different people and helping them." He also added that he usually tends to be the one who gets the "new guys" and trains them for a while until they can continue on their own. People at FG like Mr O will suggest exercises to do; suggest and explain different methods of structuring and executing exercise regimes; and more crucially, make sure each exercise is done correctly to avoid injury and ensure the muscle is exercised optimally. This is how people connect with one another at the gym and become part of the FG community. The gym members talk to one another, and through this form better relationships and become friends. Usually with weight training, you would train two to three days a week at least. So, because most will be at FG regularly or even every day, these bonds and ties that are created become stronger. It is not difficult to imagine why this gym allows for people to come and seek help with issues they have. Exercising at FG merely serves as the medium through which this happens. Linking to this idea of people at FG working together is another example from one evening I was training here:

In between my sets I would sit on one of the benches and catch my breath and just observe what is happening. It is like watching the gears of a watch working together to produce these exercising bodies. The gym has limited space and because of that, everyone works together to give each other enough space. Sharing equipment and giving each other a spot. The way everything in the gym just works together seamlessly is quite pleasing to the eye.

This just shows how the gym members work together to help one another to exercise to the best of their ability, ensuring everyone has an equal chance to use equipment; that everyone has enough physical space to do their exercises; and I think, to a certain degree, help maintain the training intensity. This is done by everyone moving into different sections of space timeously. If someone is resting, for example, and

there is an open spot, it's soon appropriated by someone else. Someone resting also acts as an indicator that someone else should start their next set. The whole movement of exercising bodies works like the gears of a clock, constantly in motion and synchronised. Even though this is a more practical example, I think it serves to illustrate how everyone works together. At FG, helping one another happens in many ways and fosters the helping and caring culture that underlies this gym community.

### 4.3 Building Community In and Outside the Gym

Clearly the FG community has been playing an important role in many people's lives in the Rusthof community since it came into existence. Frank's initial drive to help and care for his community has been sustained through the social, cultural, and human capital that the gym fosters for its members. The gym members also go out in their individual lives and sustain this way of thinking about their communities.

It is worth noting again the conversation I had with Mr T about his usually taking some of the youth "under his wing". In a sense, Mr T helps and cares for the youth he trains at the gym, not only to exercise but also to stay away from drugs and gangs. Shortly after we had this conversation, Frank mentioned to me that Mr T's one brother was *deurmekaar* (mixed up) with gangs. Mr T thus has a very good understanding of what challenges people face in his community. Therefore, Mr T helps to build community not only inside the gym, but also focuses on building community outside of the gym. Mr T has the intention of helping the youth that he encounters not only to stay away from crime, drugs, gangs, smoking, but also to make something of themselves. Mr SS plays a similar role at the gym. He is also a high school teacher and really has a passion for working with youth. Whenever Frank talks to me about people helping and caring for others at the gym, Mr SS's name always comes up. Like Mr T, he focuses on helping those he encounters (youth or adults) to live their lives as best and as healthily as they can. In order for change to come about in this community in dealing with issues that break down the Rusthof community, Mr T and Mr SS focus on helping people holistically. This is important as I do believe it is the only real way to effect sustainable change.

FG and Frank really aim to help people with the issues they have, even when these are serious in the eyes of people seeking help. One example was when Frank had a conversation with someone from the larger Rusthof community and I overheard them. This man had youth who were renting his back room who were continually

trying to steal from him and his household. He mentioned that they were on drugs (I think he mentioned “tik” specifically) and that in the past couple of instances they had even held him at knifepoint. He was asking Frank’s advice. The man said, “If he takes out his knife, I can defend myself, right?” He wanted to know what to do should a confrontation like this arise. Frank deals with many situations like these throughout the week, and immediately told him that he would see to it that he gets help. This example shows that FG and Frank not only help those in the immediate community, but also those within the larger Rusthof community. Frank has become the municipal ward councillor, which also reinforces the fact that FG and Frank are there to help those in need, either at the gym or within the larger Rusthof community.

Neither is building community limited to just the Rusthof community. As I have discussed under social capital, in order to improve social capital most effectively demands also focusing on bonding as well as bridging social capital. One way this is done through FG is by some of the work Frank does with Miss B. One evening after training Frank told me about the charity work he does with Miss B. Frank made sure to tell me that she helps him with all his charity work. One of the more recent things they had done was to organise something for disabled children from Paarl who also live in a very gangster-ridden part of town. He said they organised a shuttle to bring the kids to Strand to come and see the ocean for the first time. Frank looked me squarely in the eye. “Can you believe it? They have never seen the ocean ... The one guy didn’t even want to wet his feet because he was afraid of the water.” This shows that Frank and the people at the gym are not only willing to help those outside their community, but also that they have a passion to do so. Frank and his gym members’ passion for helping and caring for others remains impressive to me. They have also made me more willing to help and care for others, more than I have already been trying to do in my own life.

## Chapter 5: Frankie's Gym as a Space for Mentoring, Learning, and Practising a Work Ethic

By now it should be clear that FG acts as a kind of catalyst for people at the gym and surrounding the gym to construct their social community(-ies). It has its own culture of help and care for those in the Rusthof community, especially those who are at higher risk of involvement with the "bad stuff". There are three distinct ways in which this culture is produced: through mentoring, learning, and practising a work ethic, FG and its members can continue building this culture of the FG community which will undoubtedly influence the broader Rusthof community.

### 5.1 Mentoring

I have shown how adults at the gym assist and help to mentor those who are younger than they are through support, not just with exercise, but also on a more social level. The idea that I picked up on from them during my research is that the adults playing this mentoring role focus on keeping the youth away from crime, drugs, and especially gangs. These mentors (also think of them as role models) really focus on giving support to youth by showing them they do not have to fall into the "trap" of the "bad stuff" of the Rusthof community. By focusing on their work (whether this is schoolwork or young adults finding employment), exercising diligently, and not giving in to peer pressure, they can live a "good" and healthy life. Role models at FG also give advice and virtually act as councillors to the youth they are helping. For instance, Mr M, a young adult who I believe just completed Grade 12, spoke to me during a session at FG. He first spoke a bit about training and exercises, and then asked me about my studies. He was clearly very interested in why I went to study and why I chose the subjects that I did. Mr M proceeded to ask my advice on what he should do concerning his Grade 12 marks, as he did not do too well in maths and even worse in physics. He felt that he had it in him to get better marks with a re-examination the following year. He added that he wanted to work with people and help them, thereby showing the same culture of help and care for others that FG might have instilled in him. Mr M's example was that if he was a schoolteacher, he would want to mentor the kids and not just teach them. Mentoring in his sense is also going the extra mile in giving extra classes after school and helping in any other way he can. I assured him that with his good average (which is

in the 70s) he would be able to enrol for tertiary education at most institutions. He just needed to decide which field of study and work he would prefer. I am not sure whether he opened up and spoke to me about this because I am a university student doing my research project here, or because I am also older than he is and he is used to people older than him giving good mentoring advice. In my mind I think it was a mixture of the two. This example shows that people at FG really are there to help and care for one another in various ways. As the researcher, I also became part of the culture of FG. Mr M was in a sense also trying to learn from me, even though I initially played a mentoring role.

## 5.2 Learning

It should be clear by now that the gym members at FG also learn a great deal from one another, whether on how to stop substance abuse; say no to peer pressure; or even simply how to exercise optimally without injury. As I mentioned earlier, Mr O would take new members under his wing and show them the basics of weight training. This would include what exercises to do; how to structure the exercises in an effective training schedule geared towards their training goal (building muscle or slimming down); if applicable, what supplements they could use; and even tips about how to ensure their diet is right. Learning then, starts with training at FG. Those who come to be viewed as role models (mentors) essentially show newcomers how to do things. In order to get the full benefit of training at FG, you should obviously have to know how to train (if you do not already). Once again, I come into the picture. I also have quite an extensive knowledge of weight training. I usually train three days a week and I have spoken to many professional personal trainers as well as bodybuilders. Most of the knowledge people at FG learned from me was about doing an exercise correctly (proper form) and how to mix up a training routine so that you do not do the same thing every time and plateau. Plateauing in weight training refers to your doing the same exercises for a period of time and your muscles becoming used to them. This results in the muscles in your body not having to work optimally to generate better strength and muscle formation. I also learned from FG, mainly through Frank's showing me some chest exercises I had not come across previously. However, learning at FG is naturally not limited to just exercise. I have already discussed at length how gym members at FG learn from one another to overcome challenges in and better their individual lives.

### 5.3 Work Ethic

I have already mentioned work ethic and how this concept could be used in the culture of FG's attempted interventions in the community. A work ethic is central to training at FG as it forms an integral part of weight training and subsequently bodybuilding. It takes a strong work ethic to go to the gym and do your training routine continually. However, while executing your training routine, you must also maintain intensity. This entails regulating rest times after performing each set; ensuring the exercise itself is done at a correct and even tempo; making sure you consume enough water as you lose it while sweating; and that you take an adequate amount of time to complete the full training session. On the other hand, this work ethic must be sustained by eating healthy and nutritious foods, while limiting the intake of junk food. Additionally, you should ensure that you get sufficient sleep, as this is the time your body uses to rebuild and recover the muscles you trained. In this sense then it is not difficult to see how important a work ethic is when you commit to a gym, especially when you commit to FG. The work ethic is not just about training, but also about making sure you live your life in the same way – working hard to keep yourself physically, mentally, and socially fit. One simple example was that one evening the gym was quite messy before Frank came to lock up. The weight plates were scattered; dumbbells and barbells were not in their places, and loose benches were not where they should be stored. As Frank entered the gym, one of the guys training started apportioning blame, "Look Uncle Frank, they aren't putting their weights away." Frank immediately noticed the messy gym. He proceeded to reprimand everyone about the state of the gym. One of Frank's rules is that weights are re-racked, and everything should be packed away neatly. The gym members (including myself) started to tidy up, whether we had used the weights and benches or not. Some did it more reluctantly than others, but it was still done very quickly and efficiently. Although this is a very simple example, it is evidence of the work ethic of FG: you must look after what you have and be respectful in using a communal space. It is something very basic and simple which can go a long way in everyday life. You should take charge of your own life and make sure things are not "messy", which implies tidying up after yourself in the sense that you should not leave anything incomplete and "hanging around." FG's members' work ethic can provide the foundational structure to implement in their daily lives to ensure optimal social,

cultural, and human capital development. Closely linked to this work ethic is self-discipline since work ethic in this sense leads to the adoption of self-discipline.

Similar to FG, Boswell (2016) also found evidence in her study that there is a discourse of empowerment through self-discipline that is associated with weight training and bodybuilding at a gym. For one, this method of exercising spreads and becomes very social very quickly. Boswell (2016: 390) noted specifically how after two of her participants became friends through bodybuilding in the house of their uncle, they started to recruit other men from the community. This was done in an effort to help keep them off the streets and as this uncle said, “to build them up” (Boswell 2016: 390). In this way, the gym can serve to not only help empower someone but also to share this empowerment with those in the immediate community, thereby fostering greater personal and social empowerment; community building; and social cohesion amongst those in the community who are training at the gym. However, there is another even more direct link to what Frankie has tried to achieve with FG. “The gym offers a way to live ‘clean’, it takes you away from the shit in the community, because there, living clean is not seen as normal” (Boswell 2016: 390). This is a quotation from one of Boswell’s participants and it truly resonates with similar sentiments to those of FG members. Not everyone in this area of Strand is always committed to living a “clean” and healthy life - especially the young people who are most often more affected by drugs and gangs. This same participant from Boswell’s (2016: 390) study put it very simply, “when you work-out you can’t drink and you can’t eat junk food [...]. It helps you to get away from drugs and crime”. Granted, it is not always the case that people who are exercising this way will live their lives accordingly. What is important is the focus on the gym providing that sense of an alternative way of living your day-to-day life. Additionally, if one would like to progress with weight training and bodybuilding one must make changes to one's life, living a healthier lifestyle and staying away from the “bad” in the community, providing the foundation to build one's own alternative self. Through doing this people empower themselves and others by showing what can be done in situations where it might feel as if there are no options other than following the status quo.

There are also some similarities between the young adults and older men who train at FG and the older men in Salo’s (2007) study of men (masculinities) and gangs in



Manenberg. Salo's (2007) study found that men tend to find it difficult to perform their masculinities, especially, because elderly women seem to have the most social power in the social space of Manenberg. Most men come from families with low financial income and the low employment figures makes it even more difficult for them to find jobs, to be able to care for their families (Salo 2007). Many join gangs just to have some sort of financial, social, and physical support. Even though this will mean having to break laws (organised burglaries or dealing in drugs as examples) in order to contribute to and be accepted by the gangs (Salo 2007). Throughout the article it seems that men in Manenberg who cannot move away from the area have quite fixed ways of performing their masculinities. However, some older men have started trying to find alternative ways to perform their masculinities in this area. The older men provide necessary religious teaching and mentor the younger men, which encourages them to acquire the necessary masculine "toughness" with a religious lifestyle (Salo 2007: 179). In this way, they can show toughness in resisting the temptations of gangs (Salo 2007: 179). Gangsterism often provides an "easier" life as you do not have to spend hours working to get financial support and gang members immediately gain social status by being in a gang (Salo 2007: 179). A religious lifestyle "infuses the stringent self-discipline they exercise over themselves and their families with spiritual meaning" (Salo 2007: 179). The men who ascribe to this lifestyle find a way to exist and be "men" without having to be part of and associated with gangs and their associated law-breaking and brutality. In the case of FG, the older men and adults at the gym have a similar function toward the adolescents and other young adults who train there. They provide the necessary mentorship and guidance someone might need when they do not have anyone else to talk to. For example: my participants Mr C, T, B, and O were all talking to me about either themselves or close friends who also gym at FG who wanted to stop doing drugs, or who might be struggling with the motivation to finish school and not join a gang; youngsters can go and talk to these men in confidence. This adds to the alternative way of being "men" and performing their masculinities in their everyday social circles at school, home, and even among their friends.

## Chapter 6: Masculinities at Frankie's Gym

Masculinity was one of the main themes I assessed while studying FG, because most people who do weight training at FG are adolescent and adult men. Masculine identities are therefore constantly interacting in this small microcosm of the broader Rusthof community. It appears that FG has helped to reduce some of the gender-based violence in this neighbourhood, helping to work towards breaking down hegemonic and “toxic” masculinity, and to a certain degree trying to help the men in this gym become “better men”.

I have already discussed hegemonic masculinity in my theoretical framework. However, I do think it would be useful to note how hegemonic masculinity might appear in a gym context. The more muscular and “bigger” men, for example, would be given priority to some equipment, whether against someone's will or not (Klein 1993: 31). Slighter gym members also cannot train with these “bigger” men. Grunting and even a small scream (when struggling to complete a repetition) is only allowed and justified if you are part of the group of “bigger” men at the gym. The men who support this hegemonic structure, I would argue, also typically follow the lifestyle found in that gym world. The hegemonic structure aligns with what the typical structure would be in the broader society. The difference is that it would be tailored a little to suit the context of the specific gym. Hegemonic masculinity does define masculinity in set ways. Negative descriptions are not always noted as much, although the use of more positive descriptions is plentiful – like being brave, strong, and stoic (Klein 1993: 17). Negatively, it is more defined through that which it is not: “[T]o be a man is not to be a woman” (Klein 1993: 17). This is important to a hegemonic structure in a gym context as it may very well provide the platform which enforces strict muscle building for men. This implies physically showing you are not a woman by looking very muscular. Subsequently, it also entails enforcing this by targeting and most likely ridiculing those men who are not big enough but smaller, like a woman. This then becomes very interesting when assessing FG.

### 6.1 Hierarchy of Respect

I would argue that there is no clear hegemonic structure at FG. Rather there exists a kind of hierarchy of respect. It became very clear the first time I visited this gym that everybody was on an equal footing. There seems to be admiration for more

muscular and “well-built” men in the gym. It goes hand in hand with the respect given to them, mainly because others know how hard these “bigger” guys had to train (work) in order to look like this. It is not something new to me, as I have seen this in my own gym as well. As an example, one time I spoke to Mr E, who at the time had not been to the gym often. He talked about one of the “biggest” men in the gym (Mr S) in awe. It was clear he had respect for the sheer size of this man, but also to a certain extent admired his muscles and how big they were. A different example of respect at the gym emerged in a conversation with Mr O when he and Mr E were training together. Mr E used to be a competing bodybuilder and had received his provincial Western Province colours. Mr O told me this and it was very clear from the manner he related this that he had a lot of respect for Mr E – I even got the sense that he looked up to him. Mr O also told me, while Mr E was busy with a set, that he (Mr O) was disappointed in Mr E. The reason was that Mr E had stopped bodybuilding, and he insinuated that Mr E had started to go off on the “wrong path”. I later found out from Frank that when he stopped training, Mr E had developed a drug problem. After finding work in a different province and subsequently missing home too much, he had returned and was now back at the gym, training again. Therefore, respect plays a core role in how gym members think about one another. You are more likely to have a higher social position among the gym members if you earn more respect.

Respect and admiration for other gym members can also almost automatically increase if someone is very muscular. While not a hard and fast rule, many seem to follow this train of thought. It is, however, limited to the “bigger” guys that have been training for longer periods of time as opposed to those taking a lot of supplements and getting “big” quickly. Some of the “bigger” guys might feel they deserve respect because of their rigid training regimens and the pure effort that they have exerted in the pursuit of building their muscles. Possibly, some of the “bigger” guys feel undermined if they do not get the respect they feel they deserve. Here is an excerpt from my participant observation notes that gives an example of this:

There was a younger guy trying to get past Mr W who was sitting down and resting next to one of the machines in the back. As he got past and into an open piece of gym floor, he said, “Ja, you must do some weights,” after which he smiled and gave a little chuckle. Mr W was visibly irritated by this and did not find it funny at all. He and Mr S are a couple of the few who train very hard every time they are at the gym – which is almost every day. Mr W shrugged it off but was quite irritated by the remark.

Mr W was most certainly irritated by the younger man's remark because of his work ethic at the gym. Mr W and Mr S always work out extremely hard and lift some of the heavier weights in the gym. When the youngster made this joking comment, Mr W probably saw it as a negative comment, implying he does not train hard enough. In another sense, Mr W could have taken the comment the wrong way, as I got the impression it was meant as a joke. However, it still affected him. Mr S, on the other hand, is not like this at all. People regularly make jokes with and about him and it does not seem to bother him. Mr S always seems to enjoy the conversations he is involved in and if it is a funny joke, he will always laugh. The one familiar sound in the gym above that of the sounds of the guys training, is Mr S's laugh. For the most part, there is mutual respect between all gym members because they are here, training and staying away from the "bad stuff". There is also respect for one another – everyone here knows and understand that everyone is different, and they can be whoever they want to be. Gym members are supported and support one another, whether by finding the motivation to train, or even because they are struggling with withdrawal symptoms while trying to quit their addictions.

This respect among gym members at FG also included me, the young anthropologist doing his research here. As many of the gym members, I have a lot of respect for. Mr S. He was always in the gym whenever I was there in the evenings. I really admired how he was able to do reps with heavier weights after every set. I respect how he is training as I know what it would take in order to lift the same weight as he does. It was interesting to see that respect for him is always reciprocated. He is one of the friendliest and most polite people at the gym. He is always happy to talk to you and will try and assist you in any way he can – of course, making regular jokes and keeping the mood up in the gym. My admiration and respect, however, are not only limited to Mr S. Every person that comes to FG amazes me with their energy for life and drive to be the best they can be. I get the sense that the respect gym members have for one another is what fuels their drive to be "better" – whether this is to be a better husband, son, friend, or employee. The way in which all the gym members treated me with respect since I have been at FG is also amazing. This is something as simple as also greeting me as they greet everyone at the gym, either on their way in or out. I must admit that in my time at FG, the gym and its people have instilled some of what it stands for in me.

## 6.2 Being a “Man” and Role Models

Tied to this is the fact that if you do have a lot of respect and a higher social status at FG, you are more likely to be a role model. Role models are important because they assist FG in operating its SBI capacity. Additionally, and more closely tied to respect and masculinity, is that role model status could be aspirational. As a social status to which the men at FG aspire. At the gym, people will have their own ideas of what a good role model should be; however, many characteristics that the men at FG might associate with a role model would be in line with what Frank thinks is a “good man”. Frank gave me a description of what a “good man” means:

Man, to be a man you have to have respect for a woman. You must be able to “look up to” people. Meaning that you must also be able to be a role model for others. Look, for example, if a man walks down the street and he is well built, then the people would talk to you. [Frank was also referring to just generally looking ‘respectable’.] You must feel proud about yourself. The other people will then, the other guys, maybe tell you, ask you, “Where do you go to gym? How are you able to achieve such a beautiful physique?” Then you can tell them that they can ‘come here’ [meaning that ‘come here’ refers to the gym you attend] or ‘go there’ to a specific gym and tell them that is how I got my physique. And that is how people can possibly view you, how you can make a difference to people on the street [referring here specifically to people lazing about on the streets].

In this section, a good man in Frank’s view is someone who has respect for others and specifically for women; who is always willing to help someone; physically fit or just exercising regularly; and mentally healthy in that they are happy and proud to be themselves. These characteristics, I argue, are central to the form of masculine identity FG tries to instil in its members. This is divorced from the typical hegemonic form that masculinities might take in contemporary times. With Frank’s assistance, the men here are trying to help create their own original form of masculinities that are more in line with nonhegemonic masculinities as I discussed in my theoretical framework. A second element of what Frank thinks makes one a “good man” might be more in line with typical expectations of masculine identities. Most of the people I interacted with either spoke about or showed one of these characteristics:

[Y]ou should, a man must work! That is very important. If a man is married, he should be the head of the house, he must look after everything – everything should go well and as it should in the house [the man of the house must make sure everything goes well in the house and he must take responsibility for it]. He must be an example for his children, that is the most important. You can’t do “things” in front of your children [“wrong” things like drugs for example]. Because as the children grow up, they start to think that they have to do the same because my parents lived like that. And that is

the right way to live. He maybe hits his wife, and the child may take it as this is how you should live. And then that is the most important – respect. Respect goes a long way.

Employment is important for the people of Rusthof, but unemployment is high in this area and the youth struggle to find stable jobs. Work also means that people will be busy with their jobs, trying to improve their social realities in some way – whether to afford a house, have more funds available to further their studies, or be able to care for their families adequately. This is relevant, as those who do not work are more likely to engage in antisocial and criminal (most likely gang) activities. Once again, this is part of what a role model is. Striving to work and keep a job creates an example to the community. It shows this can be achieved by people living in this neighbourhood under similar social circumstances. It also shows others that there is something worthwhile to do with their lives. Frank mentions again being an example, in the context of a nuclear family. The demands of the role model include avoiding drugs and substance abuse (alcohol and drugs); being a responsible father who spends time with his kids, helping to raise them; taking care of his household by doing household tasks and managing finances; and most importantly, having equal respect for everyone – men, women, and children – and especially the mother of his child. Frank's description of a good man echoes his definition of what makes you a man. Therefore, these traits form part of many of the gym members' masculinities: having respect for and treating others equally; helping someone, whether socially (drug addiction) or physically (training); and taking responsibility for your actions and looking after those dependent on you. It is also important to be aspirational – keeping your job and finishing your education.

### 6.3 Frank as a Father Figure

Frank's central role at FG means that his masculine identity also influences those at the gym. One of the ways to describe Frank is that he is like a father figure to those who exercise here. I was talking to Mr P once and he explained the sense of "Frank as a father" to me. He said that Frank helps to keep them (the gym members) away from the "bad stuff" and motivates them to train. In his description, Mr P also said that Frank is strict, like some fathers are. For example, he insists that you wear proper exercising attire and always do your work – whether that is schoolwork or your job where you are employed. Frank is not only strict, but jokes and is always friendly, with a smile on his face. What I have picked up during my research is



exactly this; Frank assumes the role of a caring and involved “father” to everyone at the gym, He also toward me since I have been coming to the gym. As I left the gym one evening on my way home, I saw Frank returning from one of the aerobics classes he also gives. *Ek het dan vir djou gesê djy moet aantrek as djy uitkom*, he told me (he had told me a couple of times that I should put on my jersey after training and going outside). On this particular evening I was carrying my jersey as I walked to my car. The reason he was so concerned was that I should not become ill. When you have a sweaty body and then go straight into a cooler environment, you can increase your chances of catching a cold. The way Frank said it was so familiar - my own father has told me this as well. Frank acted in a caring, fatherly manner towards me and not just towards his usual gym members, thereby solidifying his role as a father figure to me as well. In a different example, I had come to the gym and had not had time to eat, so I just interacted with the gym members by joining conversations. Just before I left, I greeted Frank as usual and he asked me why I seemed a little “off”. I told him that it was possibly because I had not eaten since lunchtime. He told me to wait a second and dashed inside. After a minute he came back out and apologised because he wanted to give me a slice of leftover pizza, but someone had already eaten it. In this example, he was concerned enough about me to note my body language and tried to help me immediately. Frank’s masculinity then is influenced considerably by a philosophy of concern and care for others, like a father’s concern and care for those in his family.

#### 6.4 Male Camaraderie and Banter

As with any gym, camaraderie and banter are always present. In FG’s context, this is more specific to male camaraderie and banter because most of the gym members are men. This usually serves as a way of improving relationships with one another at the gym. During my research here, I did not find that people use jokes and banter specifically to police masculine identities, but there was one instance where this did occur. While doing my honours project research, I became very well acquainted with Mr E and Mr O. One evening they confronted Mr S, one of the most muscular and large guys at the gym. He was wearing gloves to protect his hands and to offer a better grip while holding onto the bar with his weights:

Mr E or O [I could not see which one of the two it was] said, “Your woman does not want a hand that feels like a woman’s hand touching her; she wants a man’s hand.” Mr S laughed and replied with, “Your woman does not want a rough hand touching



her that will scratch her – you at least want your hand to be smooth with minor callouses.” He continued saying, “Look at my hand” [he took off the glove-wrap he wore]. “My hand is sexy, look!” (Punt 2017: 32).

As I observed this interaction, I did not get the sense that it was meant negatively but rather that this was meant in a joking, bantering way, and the three men having this conversation interpreted it similarly. The three were laughing together at the reply from Mr S with regard to his hand being sexy. However, it could be seen that in this encounter, Mr E and O were policing the “larger” man in the gym, Mr S, to some degree. Pointing to how typical hegemonic masculinity becomes clearer in FG. They perceived him as transgressing how a “man” ought to train, touting the idea that Mr S was more feminine than masculine by using gloves (Punt 2017: 33). In fact, they had compared one of the largest guys in the gym to a woman, insinuating he was not fully “masculine” (Punt 2017: 33). This is a very important point, as according to typical hegemonic masculinity, Mr S would be much higher up in the hierarchy than Mr E and Mr O (Punt 2017: 33). It shows that policing in hegemonic masculinity does not always happen in a top-down manner (Punt 2017: 33). Mr S dealt with this policing by ridiculing the comments. Interestingly, Mr S challenged and broke down these hegemonic ideals which Mr E and Mr O tried to force onto him. However, Mr S’s positionality in a typical hegemonic masculinity could have been crucial in his ability to deal with this encounter. “The fact that he was higher up in the hierarchy compared with others in the gym, is quite possibly why he could easily and effectively negate the policing action directed at him” (Punt 2017: 33). On the other hand, I would argue that this interaction was more in line with the banter and jokes at FG. Mr E and Mr O regularly joke and strike up banter-based conversations with most people. This is always done in a light-hearted manner. In my experience at FG, jokes and banter are part of the everyday routine. The gym members enjoy themselves and therefore joke and banter to further this enjoyable experience. As Frank has also noted, people are just happy when they are here. What I found quite interesting was that not everyone joined these conversations. This was due to gym members respecting one another, more than to anything else. The gym members know who like to join conversations and be part of jokes and banter. So, if you exercise here, but prefer not to be part of such interactions, you will be left alone. Another important point is that those who do engage in these conversations usually

know one another very well. This is analogous to talking to a close friend at the local pub while having a good time. Jokes and banter are never malicious.

On a different evening I was in conversation with Mr S. I asked him how he could use such heavy weights and do so many reps. Mr SS interrupted the conversation because he was close by and overheard us talking. The excerpt from my participant observation notes is given below:

Mr SS was joking around with Mr S when I asked him how much he was squatting. Mr SS said, “Mr S doesn’t count, he just does it. [sticks out leg so as to mimic the exercise] Mr S just does a rep and feels, ‘ah I’m still fine’, then puts on more weight.” Mr S just laughed and after they moved away Mr SS asked Mr S to take off most of the weight at the leg-press machine as it was too much for him. Mr S then said that it wasn’t that much and that he could do it. [It was clear that Mr S did not want to take off the weight.] Mr SS then said that he can’t be too tired tonight as it is “Mommy’s Night”. Everyone who heard this had a good laugh [me included]. Mr S then proceeded to take off the weights and Mr SS used the machine.

During this interaction, joking and banter had occurred in different ways. Firstly, when Mr SS was talking about Mr S just feeling fine and doing heavier weights and more reps, he was admiring Mr S. It was Mr SS’s way of showing respect and admiration for Mr S, although he was making a little joke about it. Secondly, Mr S said that Mr SS could do the same weight on the leg-press machine when he was asked to take off the weight he had been using. In this way Mr S reciprocated the respect and admiration to Mr SS. Mr SS is also one of the guys at the gym that can use heavy weights. In this way, they affirmed their mutual respect as training individuals at FG. Lastly came Mr SS’s joke (possibly an excuse) that he couldn’t do the heavy weight that Mr S was doing, because it was “mommy’s night”. What “mommy’s night” entailed was not specified, but he insinuated that he needed to have enough energy left for later that evening. In this sense, Mr SS was using joking and banter to help him conserve energy for his life outside the gym – exhorting Mr S to not be “lazy” and leave his weights lying around, as one of Frank’s important rules is that you must pack away and re-rack the weights you use; and to just be funny and give everyone a good laugh.

Jokes and banter are almost always used, as in the example of Mr SS and Mr S. The first example where Mr E and Mr O were talking to Mr S happened like this only once. I did not come across similar conversations while doing my research. The use of jokes and banter builds male camaraderie at the gym, thereby furthering

relationships. However, jokes and banter are only one way people talk to and experience one another. Improving relationships with one another in this way can also help along conversations on issues someone might be struggling with. For instance, I was an “outsider” when I began my research at FG. I was included in conversations like these and naturally had a very good time and experience. This made it possible for me to become friends with many of the guys training, and we would then talk a lot more during training sessions. It is due to these relationships that I was able to discuss the issues in the neighbourhood and even people’s personal struggles. Some confided in me about drug addictions and gave me personal accounts of how FG had impacted on their lives. Jokes and banter are a way of breaking down shyness and greatly improving relationship building, as you experience FG as a place where you have a good time with friends. The stimulation of a greater male camaraderie occurs because relationships improve among people at FG. This results in people displaying much more concern and care for one another, helping one another outside of FG even more than they do already.

## Chapter 7: Women at Frankie's Gym

Women did not really feature in my research, as the gym is geared towards weight training and few women prefer this method of exercise in the Rusthof community, rather preferring the aerobics classes Frank presents at the local church hall on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It does not mean, however, that there were not women at FG.

In my interview with Frank, he mentioned yet again that the gym is an open space for anyone to come to train. For instance, he made it clear to me in the interview that women and girls were always welcome. I asked him a question on what effect women or girls would have when they train at the gym:

Nothing! Nothing. Everyone is the same. Because this is my law. I don't care if you talk to the woman/girl, but help her. You cannot come here and flirt and make funny remarks. And they [the gym members] understand this. Yes, and the women feel comfortable when they come here, and that is just my policy.

It is interesting that Frank implies that just because there are women (and girls), the men (and boys) would immediately either have a sexual or derogatory reaction. During my research time I did not encounter anything like this when there was a woman at the gym. It does not mean it never happens, but I do believe that it is uncommon. What is similarly interesting to me is that Frank really focuses on treating everyone, especially women (and girls), with the respect they deserve. This normalises the fact that everyone is equal. In fact, Frank mentioned to me previously that he has trained young women and girls who have obtained provincial colours in bodybuilding. This is contrary to mainstream sentiment in a patriarchal society. I also spoke about this earlier as it is part of the social and human capital Frank has been injecting into masculinities at FG. Another reason why women did not feature so much is that in this same interview, Frank described to me who would typically join gangs. Gangs are overwhelmingly male (men and boys). Women and girls tend to play only a kind of "support" role to gang members:

The girls, they don't really become gangsters. What they do is they hold/keep the gangsters' stuff. Say you're a gangster and you have a girlfriend, then you have a gun, then you give the gun to her or the drugs you give to her. And then you won't walk together, for instance, she would walk, and you will follow a little behind her. Now the police think, no these two aren't together, and that is what the girls will do. But they [the girls] they do not shoot you, or stab you, they are just that – they keep the stuff [women who are gangsters here do not participate in violent acts].

This description of Frank indicates that women and girls tend to stay away from most of the “bad stuff” in the community. What I also mean by this is that FG and weight training tend to place more emphasis on dealing with young men as they are the ones who tend to join gangs and engage in the “bad stuff” more easily. I did see one woman who was training one evening. She seemed very comfortable and was clearly enjoying her workout. She even asked me to share some equipment, standard practice at FG, and I happily obliged. She was in the gym and part of the FG community as much as any of the men there. Additionally, she was treated with the same respect as anyone else who was training at FG. So, the fact that this is a male-dominated space does not mean that it has the accompanying mainstream sentiment associated with masculinity and patriarchy.

On the evening I spoke to Miss B, this became even clearer. She did not stand out like a sore thumb, even though she was the only woman there that night. The other men did not treat her differently by virtue of her gender. Miss B did mention that she is an ex-weightlifting champion, which most probably made her feel even more comfortable in the gym, even though the FG environment is by default intended to be a very welcoming and comfortable space for a woman or girl. What was interesting as well is that she really encourages her daughter to cross gender barriers in sport. Both of her daughters play rugby, which is a highly stigmatised sport for women and girls. Miss B also informed me that her older daughter plays so well that she has received scholarships to play rugby at certain universities. I do feel that having at least one woman like Miss B that challenges gender stereotypes at FG, helps to break down patriarchy and problematic masculinity culture among the men that train here.

As a last example, while training one evening, a boy in his late teens was helping two teenage girls of a similar age to train at FG. He was assuming the role of the personal trainer for them, telling them which exercises to do and in what order, bringing weights to them, and making sure their form was correct. While they were training, they were conversing like any other group training at FG. I should mention that some of the guys were calling him “personal trainer”. It was not clear how it was meant but I got a sense that it was said jokingly. The guys calling him this might have been doing so in a derogatory way. The teenage boy himself took it very light-heartedly and saw the joke for what it was. It became clear after a while that it was

more a comment on the fact that he was not training as much because he was helping the girls a lot. This then shows that women and girls are welcome at the gym and supported by all who train at FG. I do think what most probably paved the way for the FG community to function as a type of “exception” to the stereotypical rule is the fact that Frank has this “policy” in place. It is not written, but everyone knows that whoever comes into the gym is welcomed and treated with the same equal respect, whether a man or a woman.

FG has the limitation of having so few women and girls in its membership. I have mentioned some examples, but the reality is that most times when I was there were no females at the gym. What I have already added on the limitation of interventions now becomes applicable. To really be an effective intervention FG needs to include more women and girls in this space, not only to make the environment less dominating by men, but also, to make it feel less daunting for a woman or girl to go and train amidst so many men. It is also so that feminine identities become part of the conversations that already exists. For example, the most effective and long-lasting method of transforming negative and destruction masculinities created in men is by talking and having to deal with both masculinities and femininities. Pattman (2007) also shows that interventions need to work towards engaging both masculinities and femininities, males and females, together into programmes. This way dealing with gender and identity which would lead to more egalitarian gendered identities to be produced as the power dynamic between masculinities and femininities can be actively broken down.

I think it is important to add that even though women and girls attending the gym seemed comfortable, this has yet to be confirmed. The fact that there are so many more men in the gym than girls might discomfort those who do come, or even discourage others not to come. In the case of Miss B, she is an ex powerlifter and therefore not only has vast experience of lifting weights but is most likely used to exercise spaces that are dominated by men. Also, I think that my own positionality added to the fact that I didn't really have an opportunity to engage with the women and girls who came to train – as in the example I mentioned earlier about the three girls coming to train with a friend. They kept to themselves and their friend, and did not really talk to anyone else or want to join in on conversations; they stayed more to the front right side of the gym where it is less crowded, and I got the impression that

they did not want to talk to me – whether this was because they were shy or because of my positionality as a White male stranger to them I do not know. I did not want to intrude and start asking them questions when they clearly did not want to talk to me.



## Concluding Remarks

To conclude, FG is a unique and interesting site where the gym is an intervention, a site where community is promoted and masculinities interact with one another. FG functions as an SBI in the Rusthof community and has clearly made a difference in most people's lives.

The most important social actor at the gym is Frank, as he is one that started this initiative and still works to keep it going to this day. Frank, and other gym members I have talked to, have expressed concern for what will happen when he dies. Frank mentioned to me in his interview that his children (other than his grandson, still in primary school) and wife do not have an interest in the gym. Similarly, Mr SS mentioned to me once that he worried about this as he did not know what would happen when Frank was no longer around. He said that Frank had achieved so much through creating this gym that it would be a shame to see it all unravel if there was no further drive for the gym as an intervention. However, I do believe that because Frank has helped and touched so many people through FG, the culture of help and care will live on through the gym members. I do believe that my research has shown that as an intervention the gym has been somewhat successful in helping to deal with the Rusthof community's challenges, especially the disbanding of two gangs (the Americans and the Schoolboys) and actively trying to assist the youth in choosing a life away from gangs, crime, and drugs and sustainably helping those who struggle with substance abuse. The intervention has also steered the Rusthof community toward having more respect for one another and working together. At least this seems to be a reality for those who have and are interacting and going to FG. Helping to create a strong work ethic among the people that come here has been crucial to FG's success. This is tantamount to something as simple as ensuring that school children go home after their training session to do their homework and don't hang around in the streets mixing with bad influences (gangsters or drug dealers). I witnessed this first hand when Frank said goodbye to one of the high school children who had finished his training. Frank asked which way he was walking home and advised the boy to take a different route. This alluded to the fact that the area he planned to walk through is notorious for gang and drug activity. What I do think FG and its members should take note of is the use of supplements by people in the gym. Steroids and other supplements are "new" drugs being introduced into the

Rusthof community increasingly. Most steroids, specifically, are also illegal and can cause bodily harm if used without proper knowledge. FG has proved over the years its aim as an SBI and continues to do so to this day.

FG is also an important social actor and site that influences community building in the neighbourhood. It shows that not only professionals and highly-educated people can influence community building. Frank started the drive for the community-based gym with experience and tacit knowledge, which has often proved to be more useful than getting “outsiders” to assist the community in the challenges it faces. Frank situated the gym from the start to serve the Rusthof community in any possible way. Frank has a central focus on working with the youth of the community, as both the Americans and Schoolboys gangs comprised adolescents still in high school at that time. I mentioned some gym members who spoke to me about this, but most people with whom I interacted (including the youth) felt that FG really does do positive work with the youth in the community. In a broad sense, it shows the youth that there is a life for them to live without engaging with gangs, drugs, and crime. What FG, albeit ignorant of the theory behind it, has been doing very well, is using the community capitals framework as the basis for influencing the Rusthof community. A unique feature of the gym has been helping to focus the various body projects in this social context, not just to focus on the individual, but also to link these body projects of gym members. This is done to achieve optimal community building, not just in the FG community, but also to influence the larger Rusthof community. FG and its members have been making specific use of human, cultural, and social capital very effectively through body projects of the people they interact with. Human capital is important to body projects, as they focus on the persons themselves. FG provides a way to be physically and mentally healthy – physically through exercising and staying fit, mentally by providing an extensive support network focused on helping and caring in any possible way. FG also creates a type of “gym culture” that provides the basis for continual socialisation with others who are not part of the FG community. This cultural capital adds to others’ ways of making sense of the society around them. Finally, FG employs social capital to tie all of these together effectively into a healthy and sustainable whole within the Rusthof community. The social capital of FG helps to improve and ensure that bonding and binding social capital are kept high. This is true especially for the gym members. I refer here to my section on FG as a site

where people learn from one another, mentor those in need, and focus on developing a work ethic which helps people in their everyday lives. FG's use of the community capitals theory thus empowers gym members and gives agency back to them in light of the fact that they must face these challenges daily in the Rusthof community.

FG has also had an influence on gender at the gym. One might expect that typical hegemonic masculinities are constructed in such a male-dominated space. However, this is not what I found to be true. Rather, it was clear that at most there was a hierarchy of respect. Those gym members who have been training longer and those who are viewed as role models are more likely to be higher up on the hierarchy. However, I do believe that this way of organising different masculine constructs is more in line with what I discussed as nonhegemonic and more egalitarian masculinities. This is core to FG, because it allows gym members to help and care for others in the gym. Even though some stand out as role models, everyone in the gym is a role model to everyone else in the Rusthof community. This shows that men and masculinities can be different from how they typically are constructed in a dominating and patriarchal sense. Once again, Frank has played a key role in influencing masculinities at FG. I refer here to what he thinks of as a "good man". His way of thinking will undoubtedly greatly influence how masculinities are modified through FG. However, even though this is his personal view on how men should think about themselves and their own identities, the gym members will incorporate their own personal views into it as well. I do reiterate though, the tendency for this modification to their constructs of masculinities is more in accord with nonhegemonic and egalitarian forms of masculinities. Central to these masculine constructs are, of course, a culture of helping and caring for others who are in need. Frank is important in influencing masculine constructs, not only through what he thinks a "good man" is, but also that he acts as a father figure. He helps and cares for those at FG (and indirectly in the larger community) as a loving and caring father. He does this mainly by simply taking an interest in other people's lives. Some of the youth in the neighbourhood might not always receive this kind of attention from their own parents, and this might be the reason for their involvement in the "bad stuff" of the neighbourhood. Frank's appropriation of this role in people's lives could also add to the success FG has achieved in the Rusthof community. Frank, in a sense, acts as

the main role model. For some of the gym members I interacted with, to disappoint Frank would be detrimental to them. As a father figure he can also provide the drive some may need to take charge of and live their lives in a healthy way. The use of banter and the emergence of male camaraderie further influence masculinities in this social space. The interaction between different masculine constructs further bonds men in the gym. This allows people at FG to “open up” more easily and talk about struggles they are facing. Additionally, because people will become better friends and stronger relationships are formed, they can intervene in each other’s lives, if, for instance, they are perpetrators of domestic violence. Clearly, FG and its members are also well-equipped to tackle problematic constructs of masculinity. Subsequently, FG and its members are able to influence and help with the construction of more nonhegemonic and egalitarian forms of masculinity in this society.

Femininity does not really feature in the FG itself, as most women tend to go to the aerobics classes at the church hall. Frank has told me many times that these women take their husbands along and enjoy working out together. What was interesting is when there were women or girls at the gym the men and boys afforded the same respect to them as they did to other men and boys. This is supported by the fact that when I did see women or girls training at the gym, they seemed comfortable and happy to be there. Note my examples of Miss B and the teenage girls training with one of the teenage boys. Frank also alluded indirectly to why the gym focuses more on men and boys. Most gang members in this area are men or boys. He explained that women and girls tend to play a more “supporting” role in safeguarding their things (drugs or weapons), and tend not to engage in perpetrating violent acts.

Critically however, there are limitations to FG and the way it operates. For one, people drop out of the gym and may start engaging with drugs and gangs, possibly finding it difficult to maintain a commitment to FG. Additionally, the focus on weight lifting can contribute to a version of being male which idealises toughness over sensitivity, although many of the young men with whom I engaged seemed to be committed to an ethic of care which they learnt as exemplified in the gym. Lastly, the effectiveness of the intervention seems to depend to some extent on the role Frank plays as a model of a caring, sensitive, compassionate, sociable and creative man. This raises the question of who can replace Frankie when he retires (he is currently in his 70s) and continue the work of FG in the community.

For me, FG is an extremely interesting and exciting sociological and anthropological site of inquiry into the Rusthof community and the use a weight training gym can have. The way FG mediates and relates all these social variables is exciting in the sense that there is a paucity of research on other gyms that function like this one. This research has not only been fun, but I also feel that it is important. It is important because it shows there are many ways in which to deal with community challenges around the world. It is obviously not a “blueprint”, but it can shed more light on how we, as social actors in various communities and societies, can help to exact a type of positive change in the communities we live in. In the end, I hope this thesis has been interesting and instructive to read. You might want to go for a session at FG to experience what I have for yourself.

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